

Devotions – March 22-28, 2015
Pastor Kurt V. Kovanen
Christ Lutheran Parish, Ironwood, MI

Sunday, March 22, 2015

Text: John 12:32

Jesus said: “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.”

On this day when the calendar tells us “Spring” is here, the promise of these words is truly astounding; for in Christ, another “season” has been added to the human lifespan—everlasting life.

Here is hope in the promise of glory which allows us to walk in confidence, to live our lives with anticipatory joy...for God through Jesus has defeated death, has dispersed the darkness, as the scripture says: “Jesus is the light of the world, the light no darkness can overcome.”

Let us pray: *Gracious God, draw all people closer to Christ and fill us with the light of your joy. Open our eyes to see your everlasting presence in all things; that we may seek those things which do not perish. In Jesus name, Amen.*



Monday, March 23, 2015

Text: Jeremiah 31:31

“The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah.”

Thanks be to God we can start over. This starting over is to be found in God’s ready resolve to begin anew. Yes, God is ready to *forgive* and to *forget*...what a blessing! Without this clean slate, we would be stuck in the ruts of past failures, repeating old patterns of behavior that get us nowhere. But now, thanks to God’s generosity and grace, a renewed relationship with God and with others is created.

Let us pray: *Gracious God, your forgiveness and grace know no bounds. On this Monday (a day many begin again the “work” week), help all people let go of the accumulated burdens of the past and free us for living as your people this day, and in the days ahead. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.*



Tuesday, March 24, 2015

Oscar Arnulfo Romero, Bishop of El Salvador, martyr, died 1980.

“It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view. The Kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is even beyond our vision. We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's word. Nothing we do is complete, which is another way of saying that the Kingdom always lies beyond us. No statement says all that should be said. No prayer fully expresses our faith. No confession brings perfection; no pastoral visit brings wholeness. No program accomplishes the church's mission. No set of goals and objectives includes everything.

This is what we are about...

We plant seeds that one day will grow or maybe die. We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise. We lay foundations that will need further development. We provide yeast that produces effects far beyond our capabilities. We cannot do everything and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something and do it very well. It may be incomplete but it is a beginning. A step along the way. An opportunity for God's grace to enter and do the rest. We may never see the results. But that is the difference between the master builder and the worker. We are workers, not master builders. We are ministers, not messiahs. We are prophets of a future that is not our own.” *(Oscar Romero)*

Let the people say ... Amen.



Wednesday, March 25, 2015

Text: Psalm 51:10

“Create in me a clean heart, O God.”

Sometimes we eat the right foods to avoid cholesterol, sometimes we take medications that lower cholesterol, sometimes the cardiologist needs to open an artery or even by-pass a blockage. All this is necessary for a heart to function properly.

How would God go about creating a “clean” heart? Forgiveness. Acceptance. Love. When the sun shines, the snow melts...in a similar way, when God’s forgiveness, acceptance, and love shine upon us...the obstacles (sin, rebellion, fear) between us and God melt away.

Let us pray: *Gracious God, shine your grace and mercy upon all people in all places and help us experience your heart of joy that gives life to all things. In Jesus name, Amen.*



Thursday, March 26, 2015

ELW Hymn #598 - "For by Grace You Have Been Saved"

Verse 3:

**So this weakness with contentment
I'll accept now in myself,
all my hardships, pains, and griefs
that still lie deep within myself.
When I'm weak, then I am strong,
for this is God's great gift. Amen.**

These words can surprise us. We'd prefer to be strong on our own. We'd strive to eliminate pain or hardship. The gift, the gracious gift, is that God simply frees us of having to try so hard. Human life *is* vulnerable it is true; accepting and sharing our weakness brings out the image of God within each of us, for it is the crucified Christ who lives within us.

Let us pray: *Gracious God, help us loosen our fists to receive your grace. Help us be content with our messy humanness, and allow us to accept each other as we are...bearers of your image. In Jesus name, Amen.*



Friday, March 27, 2015

Text: Ephesians 4:11-14

***St. Paul writes:* ¹¹The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, ¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.**

Someone once asked a boy how old he was. Quick as a flash he said, "I'm twelve, going on thirteen, but soon to be fourteen."

That's the kind of eagerness that is contagious. Because yes, we are always growing up aren't we...learning more, experiencing more. As life throws more struggles at us...we keep living, the heart keeps pumping, we keep on smiling at each other and giving each other our time and attention...a good word, a pat on the back, a tender hug. All for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ, yes, God is helping us to fully mature.

Let us pray: *Gracious God, as we plant seeds in small cups near warm window sills this early spring, remind us of the gifts you have provided for work of ministry. May we use our hands to do your work of building up, of sharing encouragement and sound teaching; so that we may grow in unity of faith. In Jesus name, Amen.*



Saturday, March 28, 2015

Text: John 12:24

Jesus said, "Unless a grain of wheat fall into the earth and dies, it will remain a single grain. But if it dies, it will bear much fruit."

A simple faith equation: death=new life. Through the cross of Christ we die to ourselves -- even that which we imagine is good and wonderful. Through the cross we come to know the presence of God. If we do not let go and do not die, we cannot live.

As people of hope we do not *blindly* believe things will simply get better, but we believe even when things don't get better. Sure it's still Lent; even though, we can trust that Easter is coming. That is our hope.

Let us pray: *Gracious God, help us through the dying process. Guide us as one who has been there, done that; the one who knows the way out of every grave. May your light shine in our darkness. In Jesus name, Amen.*

