

**Devotions – May 31-June 6, 2015**  
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**Sunday May 31**—First Sunday after Pentecost/Holy Trinity Sunday.

Text: Matthew 18:21

**Then Peter came and said to him, ‘Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?’**

I had an extra ten minutes and decided that I would run in quick (with my two children) and get my eye brows waxed. Now, in full disclosure, this is not something I keep up with so every time I go in I get asked how I want my brows shaped and frankly, I don't really care so long as they don't wax them all off. So the cosmetologist meets me at the door and walks me to her station and she says, "Just your eye brows, or your upper lip as well?" I was stunned a bit. I said, "No thank you. Just my eye brows." She seemed to really think I should reconsider and she responded, "Are you sure? Nobody has ever suggested you take care of that mustache?" Again, I'm stunned. (I really don't think I have a mustache.) I said, "Nobody has suggested this before. You are the first." As I laid my head on the sink at her station she brought it up again. "You should really consider it...if not today, soon." Then she left me to go heat up the wax. I got up, took off my little cape thing she had put on me and I walked out. The woman at the front desk asked, "Are you leaving? Will you be back?" I said, "I will not be back—ever." And I was sure to look as if I was in some great pain.

I sometimes hear stories like this about the Church. Somebody in the congregation said something stupid, or mistaken, and quite possibly offensive. And so a person never returned. Maybe they never returned to ANY church? This happens. People say stupid stuff. People do stupid stuff. Be gentle with Christ's Church... they're just people who need to be loved and forgiven. Be gentle with yourself... you're just a person who needs to be loved and forgiven. That's why we gather together as the Church. So that through the hearing of God's Word, and the assembly of the Body of Christ, we may know love and forgiveness.

Let us pray:

*Father, forgive us for we know not what we do.*

*Jesus, help us to be gentle with one another.*

*Holy Spirit, lead us back to you and into community with one another.*

*Through Jesus who loves us no matter what. Amen.*



**Monday, June 1, 2015**

Text: Joshua 1:9

**I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.**

I was with a group of High School youth down by Madison at a camp and there was a high ropes course. The last part was what they called a "Leap of Faith." So, a person (in a harness) climbs up a telephone pole-like thing and then stand on top of it and jumps in hopes of catching the trapeze bar that's dangling out there (seemingly a mile away). Now, I didn't want to do it. I saw no reason to do it. After all, we were there for the kids, not for me. I was just fine sitting at the picnic table cheering them on. But the kids wanted me to it. Finally one of the kids took out my pocket Bible and said, "If I can find a verse that tells you to get up there and jump... will you do it?" I said... sure. See, because I knew the Bible. I had been to seminary. And I knew that there was nothing in there about jumping off a telephone pole. It was a safe bet on my end.

And then I heard these words: **"BE STRONG AND COURAGEOUS. DO NOT BE AFRAID. DO NOT BE DISCOURAGED, FOR THE LORD YOUR GOD WILL BE WITH YOU WHEREVER YOU GO."**

I hated Joshua right then. And so I put on the harness... climbed the telephone pole... I felt like I was a mile up into the air. It felt like the trapeze bar was a mile away. But in that moment, I had to trust that God would be with me where ever I went... even if I fell to a crashing and painful death. And so... I jumped! (And I didn't die.)

As people of faith we are never challenged to be strong on our own but are always challenged to be strong together. May today's challenges remind you that Jesus and his people will be with you wherever you go.

Let us pray:

*Maker of the Universe, remind me that my strength is in you. Empower me to face every day knowing that your promises go with me... even on Mondays... especially on Mondays. May I be grateful for every challenge and every promise from you. Amen.*



**Tuesday, June 2, 2015**

Text: John 4:13-14

**Jesus said to her, 'Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.'**

A group of 12 High School youth and two adult leaders (myself included) drove a van out to Flathead Lutheran Bible Camp for a week of backpacking in Glacier. We made many stops to fill up on gas, snacks and take bathroom breaks. After a few stops the other adult leader said, "You know, there is bottled water up here for you to drink. It's free. You don't need to buy

soda, sports drinks, and other junk.” One youth said, “I hate water.” I continued to buy my diet soda (full of carcinogens, etc) and the kids got their stuff and the water sat there untouched. On our first day of backpacking we made it about half a mile with all our gear on our backs when we hit a part in the trail where there had been some kind of wind storm and all the trees were down... and the trail was hidden underneath the downed trees. There was no way through other than climbing over the horizontal trees. It took us about three hours to go a half a mile. Our strongest and most athletic of youth were worn out. It was rough. We had begun the day with two full Nalgene bottles of water per person but we were all out of water and we were thirsty. We had to hike a bit farther but we found a tiny stream... a really tiny stream. It was a minimal amount of water—as if the rock was bleeding—but it was enough for us to pump water into our water bottles.

Here’s the thing: When things are going just fine we sometimes reach for the imposter (Soda). But when we’re thirsty, the only one who can fill us up is the real thing (Water). Jesus is the living water. I hope you find yourself truly thirsty today so that you may cling to One who showers us with Life.

Let us pray:

*Jesus, I ask for you to remind me that you have called me by name and that you promise to walk with me, to guide me and encourage me. May I lean on your promises. May I trust that because I am baptized, my salvation is secure. And may I boldly follow you and boldly serve my neighbor. Amen.*



**Wednesday, June 3, 2015**

Text: Deuteronomy 6: 5-7

**You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise.**

A mom and her son were yelling in the house...

He wanted to take the car...

She wouldn't let him...

He wanted to move out and be on his own...

She wanted him to appreciate all she and his dad do for him...

He wanted her to stop trying to control him...

She wanted him to make smarter choices and be safe...

Finally he dropped the F-bomb and stormed upstairs and slammed the door.

A little time went by...

He didn't come down for dinner...

The house was so silent it was deafening...  
At 10:00pm the mom went upstairs and knocked on his door...  
He didn't answer. She knocked again...  
He opened the door just a crack and put his forehead out. He was still really mad...  
But his mom gave him a blessing every night...  
And tonight was no different...  
She kissed her pinky finger and made the sign of the cross on his forehead and she said, "Jesus loves you and so do I."

Not all rituals are good but having some ritual is helpful. For this family, even in the midst of a fight, there was an opportunity for grace to be shared. There is room for love even in the midst of conflict and especially God's love. There is always room for reaching out in love. Parents, you are loved by the Creator and Maker of the Universe. It's a fact. And so, you get to share that love with your children all the time. If you don't tell them, nobody will. And for those of us who do not have children, our role is also to bear God's love when we are at home and when we are away. When we lie down and when we rise... which means ALL THE TIME. ALL THE TIME. May today be a day that we speak and act out toward blessing those we encounter.

Let us pray: *God, give me courage to speak and act in love whether I feel like it or not. Amen.*



**Thursday, June 4, 2015**

Text: Galatians 3:27

**As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.**

I was at a funeral recently and noticed that a lot of people were wearing black. I was wearing black as well. But I became aware of the fact that each person took the time to choose something black to wear. The process of getting dressed each morning is part of preparing ourselves for our day. If we have a job that requires protective clothing then it is all the more significant that we wear the proper attire or harm may come to us (steel-toed boots, a firefighter's gear, police officer's bullet proof vest, a nurse/doctor's scrubs, etc). A uniform or name badge may also be expected in order for us to properly do our work. I sometimes wish I could just wear sweat pants everyday but I realize that it would not be appropriate attire to show up for a meeting in the pants I slept in last night. Similarly, business attire may not be appropriate either as it can communicate things about me that I don't want to communicate (that I'm too formal, unapproachable, hard to get to know etc....) And so we set out in the morning choosing to put on what we anticipate best fits what is ahead of us. But sometimes I am wrong. Yesterday I put on hiking clothes to go for a picnic with my family when I got a call that I needed to visit a friend in the hospital as she had fallen and broken her hip. I know she would have gladly welcomed me in my athletic attire but I changed into something more appropriate. Here is the

thing... If what we put on helps prepare us for the events of the day, let us begin each day remembering that Christ has already clothed us and bathed us in his promises. As we step into our attire each day, let us remember that we are clothed in Christ and with that comes a preparedness for whatever comes our way because Christ is going with us. May you remember your baptism today and each day and may that empower you to live boldly in Jesus' presence.

Let us pray:

*I give thanks to you, heavenly father, through Jesus Christ your dear Son, that you have protected me through the night from all harm and danger. I ask that you would also protect me today from sin and all evil, so that my life and actions may please you. Into your hands I commend myself: my body, my soul, and all that is mine. Let your holy angels be with me, so that the wicked foe may have no power over me. Amen.*

(Morning Blessing, Luther's Small Catechism)



**Friday, June 5, 2015**

Text: Romans 6:4

**Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.**

I was a missionary for a year in Tijuana and on Sundays I worshipped with an inner-city non-denominational congregation. It was a small congregation that was just starting out and as a life-long Lutheran I learned a lot about being Lutheran by being exposed to another way of worshipping and I loved it. One Sunday, we sang a song that invited each person to stand up on the day that we were saved. It started with Monday and then Tuesday.... I naively had no idea what day of the week I was saved and so when nobody stood up on Tuesday I thought that day should get a shout out and I stood up. Finally, Sunday came and most people stood up. That made a lot of sense to me. I recently found out that I was baptized during a Thanksgiving Eve worship service and so I suppose Wednesday would have been a good day to stand up as it was a Wednesday night that I became a child of God. Now, as I reflect on the question as to what day of the week I was saved I really have one response... **EVERYDAY**. There isn't a day that comes that I don't need to lean on the promises of salvation that I was given in the waters of baptism. And with every day that passes it becomes more clear that the Holy Spirit is at work in my life. May you lean into the assurance that you are saved: from sin, from death, from facing the world alone. And may you trust that each day Jesus is at work in your life and in the world.

Let us pray:

*Jesus, my Savior: I give you thanks for the eternal promise of my salvation. Help me to put my trust in that promise so that I may serve my neighbor, celebrate joy and follow you today and every day. Amen.*



**Saturday, June 6, 2015**

Text: Luke 24.46-48:

**Jesus said to his disciples, ‘Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.’**

I was almost a 7<sup>th</sup> grader as I spent my annual week at Mt. Cross Lutheran Camp in Santa Cruz, CA (near where I grew up) and on Monday night while at campfire I saw my mom, my dad and my pastor walking up the path toward the campfire. I knew immediately that they had no reason to come to camp mid-week... unless... they knew. I was caught. I was found out. I was in trouble. About a week before camp had started I had stolen some items and they knew it. Now, I knew my own ability to be “bad” but somehow it was really horrible to realize that they now knew it too.

A few months later I was sitting in the kitchen while my mom was washing dishes and I said, “*Mom, I don’t want to go to church anymore.*” I expected her to say, “*It’s not your decision to make. We are Olsons and we go to worship.*” Or maybe, “*You’re going and that’s that!*” But she didn’t say those things. She calmly sat down near me and asked, “*Why don’t you want to go anymore?*” And I said, “*Because I’m bad. Everybody else at church is good. But I’m bad.*” And as I tried to fight my own tears my mom had one of those moments when she knew just what to say (with the help of the Holy Spirit, I’m sure) and she said, “*Oh, Kari. If the people at church were so ‘good’ they wouldn’t need to be there. We all need Jesus. That’s why we go.*” That’s why we go? You mean we don’t go because we are “good church-going people?” And we don’t go because “we’re supposed to?” It was the beginning for me, of understanding that the church is a hospital for the sick, not a country club for the perfect. I might be able to fit in with a bunch of folks who don’t have it all figured out but are going to follow Jesus and try to love and serve one another.

Let us pray:

*Dear Lord, forgive me for what I have done and for what I have left undone. And remind me that because of you, I am forgiven over and over again. Amen.*

