

**Devotions – June 14-20, 2015**  
**Synodical Women’s Organization**

**Sunday, June 14, 2015**

Balance

By Mary Lou Stefanski, SWO Board Member

Text: Acts 3:6-8, NKJV

**“Then Peter said, ‘Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have I give thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.’ And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God”.**

This scripture dealt with a lame man who was a beggar and had to be carried each day to the gate of the temple Beautiful. In dealing with the Christian Motorcyclists Association I have learned how so little can give so much to those who have sometimes nothing. One of our evangelists, John Ogden, Sr., had an opportunity to present Run for the Son motorcycles to ministers in Zambia and Zimbabwe (African countries) at ministers’ and pastors’ conferences. He stated in one of his informational writings that in many cases “by our standards in the US, they traveled without proper places to sleep or food to eat...Men and women coming to these conferences... traveled for 3 days on foot, bicycle, dugout canoe or various other meager transportation methods... at the conference their main meal consisted of ground up corn and they slept on blankets on the floor.” Wow, are we in the US as dedicated, have as much zeal for our God as our African brothers and sisters or is it a matter of simply going to church, taking about 5 to 10 minutes in a nice vehicle to get there, staying an hour or two to worship, throwing \$5 or \$20 in the collection plate, maybe having coffee and snacks during a fellowship afterwards, going home (possibly out to lunch), and having a comfortable couch to nap on so we can watch sports on TV or a nice queen-sized bed to sleep on later in the day and forgetting about God (oh and watch the time during service and get disgusted if the pastor’s sermon is a little longer than 15 minutes)? Hmmm. The people in Africa had nothing (basically), yet they had such a desire to learn about God and the Holy Spirit to bring back to their home towns that time and distance meant nothing. Their spiritual desire over-rode everything else. By comparison, we have the silver and gold (so to speak), but do we place more emphasis on our wealth than we do our spiritual growth? Can we look at our spiritually rich African neighbors and perhaps learn from them how to put more of God in our “banks”? Think how easy we have it and how much that others don’t have that we for granted. Are we taking God back to our homes, on our travels, to our neighbors or are we a little lazy considering our discipleship? As a CMA member, we do our best to minister to other motorcyclists and are, by African standards, extremely wealthy. We are blessed to give much to those who have so little, but it takes little effort on our part to collect the money we send, comparatively speaking, when thinking of the effort put forth by our friends in Africa to attend a conference. (Yet, our gold does much when used for God’s ministry.) Again we’re looking at money (silver and gold) versus spirituality.

I'm not saying we're exactly spiritually poor but more looking at the "balance" between the two. Do we have more silver and gold and less of God or do we have a proper balance? The beggar "leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God" not because disciples gave him money, but because they had seen him as they walked by and the beggar was therefore blessed. God wants us to be wealthy according to our needs, but he also wants us to use our gifts in ministry to others. Our first priority should be our commitment to God. We need to grow in faith through Jesus Christ so we can help others in their faith journey. God will give us what we need but we need to be willing to accept. We need to seek His will and act accordingly. I pray that we use whatever gifts the Spirit has given us to help others and ourselves grow into the person Christ would wish us to be and that our lives be balanced with our wealth and our spirituality (maybe tipped more towards the latter). As Tiny Tim would say, "God bless us everyone." God bless you. Will you be a worthy representative of God today, humble, patient, and loving, so that others can see God's true nature? Will you be his gentle reminder?

Let us pray: *Dear God, I want to be a good and worthy example of your gentleness, humility, patience and love. Work through me today. Amen*



**Monday, June 15, 2015**

PROMISES by Jill Flickinger, Synodical Woman's Organization Treasurer

Text: Psalm 31:15

**"My times are in thy hand."**

"My times are in thy hand" was the Class Motto for my 8<sup>th</sup> Grade class as we graduated from Trinity Lutheran parochial school. We picked our own Motto, and I'm not sure if we picked this one because of its meaning or because it was short and would be easy to memorize. Given what I remember about that decision and what I know about 8<sup>th</sup> graders, I suspect it was probably the latter. But however we came to pick it, this verse did make a lasting impression on me, and I've thought of it often over all the years since.

What I find most beautiful about my faith are the promises. Scripture is full of promises from God to God's people:

"And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Matthew 28:20b

"Do not let your hearts be troubled...I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am there you may be also." John 14: 1, 3

"...so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's." Romans 14:8b

"...and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." Revelation 7:17b

“...do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.” Isaiah 41:10 (also my Confirmation verse)

And I think my favorite: “For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 8:37-39

And there are so many more. You probably have your favorites, too. These promises remind me that God chose to become one of us, to become truly human in Jesus Christ, and that because of that God knows and understands everything about what we hope, feel, and need.

Emmanuel...God with us...God BEING us. God, the All-Powerful, All-Knowing, Omni-Present God.....that is the God who chose to become one us. And with that decision come all these promises, assuring us that God loves us, understands us, is with us, and gives us the final victory through Jesus Christ.

Knowing all that, and believing those promises, I can indeed say with confidence that yes, my times, my life, my future are all in God’s hands, and that there is nothing that can separate me from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Rejoicing in that, we can all say.....AMEN!



**Tuesday, June 16, 2015**

By Virginia Heczko  
Synodical Women’s Organization Board

Text: Ephesians 1:11-12

**In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.**

We have to remember when things don’t go the way we want that God set the way things were going to go in our life when we were born and any mistakes are from our doing and pray to God for forgiveness.



**Wednesday, June 17, 2015**

By Peggy Gattrra  
Synodical Women’s Organization Board

As a Christian, you have the most glorious privilege of being an example of Christ to everyone around you. You best do so by being humble, gentle, patient and loving, just as God has been with you. Think of what that means for you today. You have the opportunity to remind others that there is a God who loves them dearly. And they will be attracted to him because of the qualities he shows through you. Will you live as a worthy representative of God today, inviting, humble, patient, and loving, so that through you others can see God's true nature? Will you be his gentle reminder?

Let us pray: *Dear God, I want to be a good and worthy example of your gentleness, humility, patience and love. Work through me today. Amen*



**Thursday, June 18, 2015**

By Pastor Mary Beth Kovanen  
Synodical Women's Organization Board

Text: Read Psalm 145.

Today marks the beginning of Ramadan, a month of fasting for many Muslims in the United States. Fasting during Ramadan is one of the Five Pillars (fundamental religious duties) of Islam. It is a time of self-examination and increased religious devotion.

People of Islamic faith are encouraged to read the entire Qur'an during Ramadan. Ramadan is also a month for acts of charity. Some Islamic centers and organizations actively take part in charity events and activities such as giving basic necessities, including food and clothing, to the homeless or donating school equipment to schools.

The ELCA is a founding member of Shoulder-to-Shoulder, an organization which works at the national level and offers strategies and support to local and regional efforts to address Islamophobia. They call upon our fellow citizens to treat each other with compassion and honesty, and to foster an ethical commitment to bedrock American values such as pluralism and religious freedom, mutuality and respect—values also at the core of our religious traditions.

Let us pray: *Gracious God, shine your grace and mercy upon all people in all places for you are gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. In Jesus' name. Amen.*



**Friday, June 19, 2015**

By Melzee Jacobson  
Synodical Women's Organization Board Secretary

Text: Ephesians 5:15-17

**Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil. So do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.**

As a child the world was so big and the days always seem to be so long and there was always something to be doing and we always had plenty of time to do it all. Dealing with the maturation aspect of life brings a whole new outlook to the perception of time. During our adolescent years we found that there was not quite as much time to do all the things that we wanted to do, we had to learn to make choices, still sometimes yearning to be able to do it all. Those later teen years became more filled with goals of getting good grades, looking towards graduation and the time when we would become adults, making decisions on how much time you were willing to invest developing relationships with others when eventually you knew the final outcome would be that you were all be going in different directions. That is when the old saying “Make new friends, but keep the old. Some are silver and the others gold” took on a new perspective. Into the years of parenting when we not only made decisions for ourselves but now for our children and then grand-parenting and then great-grand-parenting. How different all these stages are. Then as we start into those days of retirement, which have been said to be the golden years when actually they are more like the rust years (physically) when we start thinking about clearing out all that we have collected over the years and decide on what projects that we have dreamed about will actually get our attention to completion.

What if we had always lived a simpler life.....one that God had called us too? Sure there would be hectic times, there would be valleys and mountains to travel through, there would be hurts and joys...but perhaps it could have been less stressful if we had followed him instead of striking out on our own.

Priorities have changed as the world has changed. It used to be that gathering for a church service was important to the whole family. Gathering together to hear the Word, getting to know Jesus just a little bit better each time. Today the world offers too many options and it becomes easier to put God and our church families on the shelf (thinking that they will always be there but this thing I want to do can only be done now). The catch in not attending church regularly is that it is easy to stay home but it is harder to start coming back on a regular basis.

Think about it ..... Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil. So do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.



**Saturday, June 20, 2015**

By Frances H Voyce, Northern Great Lakes Synodical Women's Organization President

Some friends play at friendship, but a true friend sticks closer than one's nearest kin. *Proverbs 18:24 NRSV*

Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. *Ecclesiastes 4:9 KJV*

Many years ago, my husband and I attended the non-Roman Via de Cristo at Marygrove Retreat Center. This weekend event changed our lives. I remember learning one important lesson at that time and that was “To have a friend-you first have to be a friend- and then lead them to Christ”. Not sure of the exact words.

Yes, at times my life does become lonely after my husband died, but these words keep coming back to me. I have moved back to the little farm I was born on and my father before me. I have found new friends, especially in my church work and quilting guild.

The Lord has opened many doors for me to meet many different women from all over the world through the Women of the ELCA. I have had the honor and privilege to serve as President of this fine organization in our Synod. This is the same organization my mother once was a very active member of. Yes, many things have changed and we need to change with them. But one thing will always remain the same and that is we all need friends. I can't think of a better way to meet friends than to become active in an organization that is helping others and studying the Lord's word together.

I am quoting from “The Quilt of Life” by Mary Tatem:

#### God's Pattern

Friends provide strength to one another. Shared companionship brightens life. God's pattern is to look for ways to include people in our activities and to avoid being exclusive.

Let me close my devotion by praying “Lord provide us with companionship and friends to brighten our life each day. Let us welcome new ways to serve you by our actions and words. Most of all thank you for all the wonderful women on our Synodical Women's Organization Board who have become my friends.”

