

Devotions – August 16-22, 2015
By Members of Trinity Lutheran Church
Ishpeming, Michigan

Sunday, August 16, 2015

Christ's Sacrifice Once for All by Sue Boback

Text: Hebrews 9:25-26

Nor was it to offer himself again and again, as the high priest enters the Holy Place year after year with blood that is not his own; for then he would have had to suffer again and again since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the age to remove sin by the sacrifice of himself.

It starts with a firm “No” or “Don’t touch.” Learning that something is wrong comes at an early age. Our parents picked us up and removed us from the temptation we faced. Our next reprimand may have been a tap on the hands or the bottom. Throughout our growing up and learning we experienced consequences for our inappropriate behavior. If we were blessed with good parents, there would come a time of forgiveness: “Forgive and forget.” I remember going through a period of doubt as an adult, wondering how God could “forgive and forget” when I kept sinning. Admitting I was a sinner wasn’t as hard as trying not to sin again.

Here are two examples of what helped me through this time of doubt:

- 1) I remember Clara Swanson (Marilyn Andrew’s mother) sharing this meaning of GRACE: **God’s Redemption (or Riches) At Christ’s Expense.**

This analogy I learned from Pastor Kalweit in Lay School:

- 2) Imagine that you are in court, facing the judge for your sin. But in this court, God is the judge and as you stand before him, he reads every one of your sins – from the time you hit your sister, cheated on a test...gossiped about your neighbor, stole from your employer...lusted after your friend’s spouse...took the name of the Lord in vain...and on and on and on.

Then God (the judge) is about to sentence you, but Jesus steps in between you and God so that God cannot see you. Jesus speaks to the judge and tells him that whatever your sin is, he will take the burden for you, to sentence him. God accepts the deal, and Jesus takes the fall for you.

Throughout the Old Testament scriptures many were called by God to carry out his message of purification by blood sacrifices. But this text tells us that only Jesus has made the sacrifice that promises us forgiveness and eternal life. He is the evidence of the new covenant. His blood, shed for us is the only sacrifice. But it is not enough to acknowledge that Christ Jesus exists, or

to believe in God. We must admit that we are sinners, claim Jesus as our Lord and Savior, and invite him into our hearts.

Let us pray: *Heavenly Father: Help me to seek you in all temptation and acknowledge the great sacrifice of your Son Jesus for me. May I strive to live a life pleasing to you. Amen.*



Monday, August 17, 2015

Slave to Sin No More by Peter Johnson

Text: Galatians 5:1

For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

Are we born so we can be sinful? If a baby had the ability to think, he or she certainly wouldn't come into this world wanting to hurt someone emotionally or physically. As parents hold a newborn, they don't look at this child of God thinking to themselves what trouble and problems this infant is going to cause. Each and every one of us was brought into this world unaware of how much trouble we were going to cause. God gave us ten specific rules to follow, so what do we do? We've made earthly items our god. We use God's name inappropriately. The day of worship is not kept holy. We steal, kill, make up stuff about others that isn't true, and we want things that belong to the guy down the street. How fortunate we are that through our baptism we have been washed clean of our sin and marked with the sign of Christ forever. We are CHRISTIANS. In Galatians 5:1, Paul is telling the people that Jesus has given us freedom from enslavement to the law. God gave us the Ten Commandments to live by, but knowing how inept we would be at keeping them, He gave us His Son Jesus so that the rigorous demands of the law wouldn't keep us from gaining God's favor.

Let us pray: *Father in Heaven, we thank you for sending your Son to free us from the burden of sin. Continue to send your Holy Spirit to us providing wisdom, knowledge and understanding. Amen*



Tuesday, August 18, 2015

Jesus Our Priest by Charlie Yeager

Text: Hebrews 5:5-6

In the same way, Christ did not take on himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father." And he says in another place, "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."

Genesis affirms that Melchizedek was “priest of God Most High.” (Genesis 14:18)

As Christians we believe that Jesus is the Messiah, “a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek” (Psalm 110:4). Jesus is considered a priest in the order of Melchizedek.

In Hebrews 5:5-6, Jesus did not ask to become a high priest. But God said to him, “You are my Son; today I have become your Father...You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.

Some Christians believe that Melchizedek was a type of Christ, and other Christians hold that Melchizedek indeed was Christ. Melchizedek’s name means “king of righteousness” and according to the author of Hebrews, Melchizedek is he “king of peace.” Hebrews 7:3 states, “Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he (Melchizedek) remains a priest forever.”

As Christ’s followers, we believe there is no need for another priest, Jesus is our priest forever.

As Christians, we have been called by God to be part of the priesthood of all believers. When called, it becomes our responsibility to represent the people in matters related to God.

Martin Luther illustrated this in *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*. He wrote that all baptized Christians are “priests” and “spiritual” in the sight of God: “The pope or bishop anoints, ordains, consecrates, and prescribes garb different from that of the laity, but he can never make a man into a Christian or into a spiritual man by so doing. He might well make a man into a hypocrite or a humbug and blockhead, but never Christian or spiritual man.” As far as that goes, we are all consecrated priests through baptism, as St. Peter says in I Peter 2:9. “You are a royal priesthood and a priestly realm.” And in Revelation 5:9-10: “Thou hast made us to be priests and kings by thy blood.”

Let us pray: *Dear God, thank you for sending us your Son, Jesus Christ. He is our priest forever. Help us to accept and carry out our responsibility to represent the people in all matters related to you. Amen*



Wednesday, August 19, 2015

Where Is Your Holy Place? By Dave Skrenes

Text: Hebrews 9:12

He entered once for all into the Holy Place, not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption.

A gift that God gives us is “holy places.” The lesson from Hebrews says, “He entered once for all the holy place...thus obtaining eternal redemption.” Where is your holy place? For me a

holy place is one that I feel safe in. A holy place is somewhere that I can forget all my problems and enjoy the moment.

When I was in high school at Westwood, I felt very safe on a football field. There was something wonderful about putting on my shoulder pads and my helmet and going on that field. Between the white lines I could leave all the issues and problems in school behind. One year a very close friend of mine died suddenly and tragically. I felt like throwing up during those days except when I went on to that football field. There I was at peace. There life seemed good.

Where is your “holy place?” Where is your spot where the world does not bother you anymore? This may sound different to you but that football field during those years when I was in high school was like what heaven must be like. For me, the football field whether at practice or in a game seemed safe, comfortable and friendly.

I think Jesus is making holy places like that for all of us. He is building a place where we as his people can feel very good. Someday we all will be with him in that place. Until then, find a place of comfort, a place of safety and a place of joy and live as much as you can there. It will be a holy place and God will be there with you.

Let us pray: Thank you, dear God, for helping me to find holy places. Be with us as we live there. Amen



Thursday, August 20, 2015

The Simplicity of the Sacrifice by Jim Kippola

Text: Hebrews 9:13-14

For if the blood of goats and bulls, with the sprinkling of the ashes of a heifer, sanctifies those who have been defiled so that their flesh is purified, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to worship the living God!

Forty-three years as a member of Trinity has certainly provided many “crossroad events” in my life. In the beginning as a new Ishpeming resident and teen it was the coaxing of a parent to “go to church” on Sunday – certainly discretionary, and with the choice, I opted for Easter and Christmas services for many years. Confirmation of the kids certainly had its spiritual rewards. Three consecutive terms on the Council provide the impetus for thoughts like “I am really into the Church now!”

Two weeks ago, Pastor handed me the verses displayed above and said something like “thanks in advance for your effort to prepare a devotional.” His expression assured me refusing was not an option. Besides, I’d heard plenty of devotions, many from my bell tower perch, often thinking what a great job, knowing how each presenter exhibited significant introspect and wit. But relief

always followed, knowing a bullet had been dodged in not being asked to do a turn. Not so lucky this time.

Arriving home and still glowing with my Sunday mindset, I jumped on line to check out the verse, and heck, I knew how to do this, I had a class back in college called the Judeo-Christian Heritage and we regularly visited the Interpreters Bible. Now time passed and I quickly had a new sense of respect for what a pastor had to do in preparing Sunday's sermon, eulogizing the deceased and joining a couple in marriage – all in the same week. None the less, and with my amateurish attempt to understand so many scholarly views displayed on my screen from the internet describing in the nth detail the subject verses, I would still give it a shot.

I saw the pastor a few days later and asked him, “You know that song, ‘Lord, this time you gave me a mountain?’” He said, “Yeah, written by Marty Robbins...” My jaw dropped and I said, “That's how this devotional thing feels right now.” He coached me a bit and I wandered off again thinking this challenge was achievable.

As the deadline approached my mindset changed to the simplicity of the whole thing. In the context of the assigned passage, it occurred to me then what a small sacrifice it has been in keeping my version of a church life as compared to Jesus' offering referenced in this passage. Humbling indeed, but as time passes, like the aging of his blood we share at Communion, Sunday to Sunday I come just a little closer to understanding this miracle.

Let us pray: Lord, each day in this cluttered world let me see the simple path to our truth. In Jesus' name. Amen



Friday, August 21, 2015

Gone Astray by Makayla Junak, Brittany Nardi and Kayla Melka

Text: Isaiah 53:6

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way, and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

When I awake I am a child of God born into life, peace, love – but also sin. Not long after my alarm goes off in the morning and I drag my tired body out of bed, then I begin my sinful acts of the day. So what am I doing to begin this journey of sin? I have thoughts running through my mind of having to sit with that person on the bus who talks too much and knowing that a certain teacher always lets us out late for lunch.

Where God wants us to go is not where we always want to go. You keep doing wrong, and break your relationship with God more and more every time. Teens and young adults are badly influenced nowadays with drugs and alcohol. They do it thinking it will ease their troubles, but

really it only makes them more troubled. Throughout the day we make bad decisions, but we know we will be forgiven, because Jesus died on the cross for our transgressions.

Let us pray: *Dear Lord, thank you for Jesus' sacrifice for me. Help me to follow you this day. Amen.*



Saturday, August 22, 2015

God's Plan by Dennis Mattila

Text: John 16:5

Now I am going to him who sent me, yet none of you asks me, "Where are you going?"

Life has been compared to a beautiful decorative rug. It has two sides. One side – the underside – is full of dark, mangled threads that make no sense to us, full of knots with no pattern at all. That is the way we see life so often, from the underside; full of confusion, knotted lives, no patterns to why things happen the way they do.

But when we look at the rug from the top side, we can see the beautiful patterns, the designer's true work. God sees life from the top side. He sees the finished and full picture.

Just as the disciples could not fully understand what was happening when Jesus tried to explain God's plan for His life, we too do not always understand what God has in store for us.

According to his wisdom, he gives us the understanding of his will that he knows we need.

Let us pray: *Lord, we ask and pray that you will give us understanding of your will. Help us to know and understand your plan for our lives, and give us the strength and courage to do your work. In Jesus name we pray. Amen*

