

**Devotions – August 30 – September 5, 2015**

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**Sunday, August 30, 2015**

“Home”

Text: Deuteronomy 31:8

**“It is the Lord who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.”**

My family had just moved from Wisconsin to Illinois. As my parents unpacked, my two year old sister and I played on the swing set in the backyard. When dinner was ready, Mom called, “Time to come home for dinner!” to which my sister replied with tears, “I don’t have a home.” According to Data Lab 1/29/15, “A person in the United States is expected to move 11.4 times in his lifetime.” Current statistics for this year, but I’m sure statistics were not how my mother comforted my sister after her first move. In the words from Deuteronomy, Moses is comforting his successor, Joshua. A good reminder for all of us:

**“It is the Lord who goes before you.  
He will be with you; he will not fail or forsake you.”**

Since that first move, I have moved another 15 times. Moving is never easy, but what a comfort to know that wherever we are on life’s journey God is with us.

Let us pray: *Dear God, Thank you for walking with us each day. Today we especially would ask you to be near all those who are moving: to a new country; to a new city; to a new home; to a new school or classroom; to a new job; to a new church family.... You know their specific needs, but please help them to know that you are always near. We ask in the name of our Savior, Jesus the Christ. Amen.*



**Monday, August 31, 2015**

“Thank You, Lord”

Text: Philippians 4:4-6

**“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of**

**God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."**

An anonymous quote states:

"What if you woke up today with only the things you thanked God for yesterday?"  
How would you begin your day? How will you thank God today?

At an early age we teach our children "Please" and "Thank You." We help them practice until they do not need as many reminders. My heart melted the first time our one year old granddaughter told me, "Thank You, Gamma." Yet, I still sometimes need Paul's reminder: **"...in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God."**

How do I "practice" thanking God? At day's beginning, a wake-up prayer of thanks for a night of rest/a day of new beginnings; or an unspoken prayer of joy as I walk celebrating God's creation. Sometimes our family sings thanks at mealtime. We join the Psalm during worship and praise God with hymns at home around the piano. In college it was a "thank you" journal. I also thank God as I write thank you notes. The possibilities are endless, but I need the discipline to take time to give thanks. My prayer is that you and I will take time today to give thanks .

Let us pray: *Dear God, "We thank thee than, O Father, for all things bright and good: the seed time and the harvest, our life, our health, our food. No gifts have we to offer for all Thy love imparts, but that which thou desirest, our humble, thankful hearts! All good gifts around us are sent from heaven above. Then thank the Lord, oh, thank the Lord for all His love." \* Amen.*

\*Lyrics by Stephen Schwartz from "All Good Gifts"/Godspell



**Tuesday, September 1, 2015**

"Gifts of Love"

Text: Isaiah 12:4-6

**"And you will say in that day: Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name; make known his deeds among the nations; proclaim that his name is exalted. Sing praises to the Lord, for he has done gloriously; let this be known in all the earth. Shout aloud and sing for joy, O royal Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel."**

Today is my mother's 88<sup>th</sup> birthday. In the first verse of Martin Rinkart's hymn, "Now Thank We All Our God" we sing:

"Who from our mother's arms, Hath blessed us on our way  
With countless gifts of love, And still is ours today."

God's blessing of love, first known to me by my mother's love. What a blessing!  
"Countless gifts of love" to me is an awesome phrase. If I am honest, I can never count/recall each of God's gifts of love to me, but isn't it wonderful to know God's love is always with us...  
"And still is ours today?" As the psalm of thanksgiving in Isaiah 12 proclaims:

**"Sing praises to the Lord, for he has done gloriously;  
let this be known in all the earth.  
Shout aloud and sing for joy, O royal Zion,  
for great in your midst is the Holy one of Israel."**

Let us pray: *Dear God, thank you for the gift of love. Thank you for my mother and her love. Help me to give thanks for your "countless gifts of love" and share your love with those I meet today. Amen.*



**Wednesday, September 2, 2015**

"Follow the Leader"

Text: Matthew 16:24

**"Then Jesus told his disciples, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves, and take up their cross and follow me.'"**

I have a simple tin sign that shows a stick figure of Christ carrying his cross. Above the figure is the title "Follow the Leader;" below the figure are the above words of scripture. As I have pondered that sign, it reminded me of an action song (excerpt from Disney's "Peter Pan" song "Following the Leader") that we taught our kindergarten Sunday School class:

**"We're following the leader; the leader; the leader.  
We're following the leader wherever he (she) may go."**

After the first time, with a teacher leading, the children would take turns leading (and following). What a good example of listening, watching and following a leader! Isn't that a simplified version of what we, as disciples of Christ, are called to do? Listen to God's word, watch our words/actions, and follow Christ's example. Or, as expressed in the 2<sup>nd</sup> verse of the hymn, "Christ of the Upward Way":

**"Give me the heart to hear Thy voice and will,  
That without fault or fear I may fulfill  
Thy purpose with a glad and holy zest  
Like one who would not bring less than his best."**

According to [www.hymntime.com](http://www.hymntime.com), Pastor Walter Mathams, while serving a church in Inverness-shire, Scotland, wrote this hymn for boys visiting on summer holiday (many with

fathers away at war). Pastor Mathams wanted to impress on the boys loyalty to Christ and their country. As I strive to be a Follower of the Way, I hope I will listen, watch, and follow “with a glad and holy zest like one who would not bring less than his best.”

Let us pray: *Dear God, “Christ of the Upward Way, my Guide Divine, where Thou hast set Thy feet may I place mine, and move and march wherever thou hast trod, keeping face forward up the hill of God.”\* Amen.*

*\*First verse of “Christ of the Upward Way”*



**Thursday, September 3, 2015**

“I Love to Tell the Story”

Text: 1 Peter 3:14b-16

**“Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated, but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence.”**

At Vacation Bible School (VBS) this August, I acted the role of a non-believing neighbor of Jesus’ mother, Mary. “Mary” retold the stories of Jesus’ birth, visit to Simeon and Anna, temple trip at 12 years old, and Jesus’ miracle of water into wine. Interspersed with the stories were conversations which focused on the questions and doubts of the non-believer. The elementary school children were not shy in their advice to the non-believer: read the Bible, go to Sunday School/church, pray, and be kind to others.

Their job was to try to convince the non-believer that Mary’s son, Jesus, was God’s son. Most profound to me was when a child would approach me, the non-believer, and ask, “Do you believe now?” Although it was a challenge to play the role of a non-believer, the VBS role helped me to challenge the children and myself to:

**“Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you.”**

May I be ready to witness for Christ **“with gentleness and reverence”** whenever and wherever God calls me to serve.

“I love to tell the story of unseen things above, of Jesus and His glory, of Jesus and His love; I love to tell the story because I know ‘tis true. It satisfies my longings as nothing else can do.”

Excerpt from the hymn, “I Love to Tell the Story” Arabella C. Hankey

Let us pray: *Dear God, Help me to tell your story today. I ask this in the name of your Son, Jesus the Christ, in whose name I pray. Amen.*



**Friday, September 4, 2015**

“The Potter of My Clay”

Text: Isaiah 64:8

**“Yet, O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are the work of your hand.”**

Text: Jeremiah 18:1-6

**“The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah from the Lord: ‘Come, go down with me to the potter’s house, and there I will let you hear my words.’ So I went down to the potter’s house, and there he was working at his wheel. The vessel he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter’s hand, and he reworked it into another vessel, as it seemed good to him. Then the words of the Lord came to me: ‘Can I not do with you, O House of Israel, just as this potter has done?’ says the Lord. ‘Just like that clay in the potter’s hand, so are you in my hand, O House of Israel.’”**

While my husband was in graduate school, I took an evening pottery class at the university. My initial attempts to create a bowl on the wheel were “spoiled” beyond a recognizable shape. The instructor encouraged each of us with suggestions focused on hand/tool placement, pressure exerted and speed of the wheel. By listening and practice, gradually I was able to craft a recognizable bowl. Many times I’ve said, “God isn’t finished with me yet.” Or, “I’m a work in progress.” But, am I listening and allowing God to “rework me into another vessel?” What will I become as the Spirit fills me? How/where will I be called to serve? I am still clay, “a work in progress” in God’s hands.

Let us pray: *Dear God, “Have Thine own way, Lord; have Thine own way! Hold o’er my being absolute sway! Fill with Thy Spirit ‘til all shall see Christ only, always, living in me.”\* Amen.*

\*4<sup>th</sup> verse of the Adelaide Pollard hymn, “Have Thine Own Way, Lord”



**Saturday, September 5, 2015**

“Sing to the Lord”

Text: Psalm 92:1-4

**“It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to your name, O Most High;**

**to declare your steadfast love in the morning, and your faithfulness by night, to the music of the lute and the harp, to the melody of the lyre. For you, O Lord, have made me glad by your work; at the works of your hands I sing for joy.”**

If you have been sharing this week’s devotions, you’ve noticed hymns in many of my devotions. When we were first married and preparing for our move to Alaska, the choice was between the purchase of a stereo or a piano. The piano won, and I am glad!

When life overwhelms me, one place I find comfort is to sit down, open a hymnal, and start to play the piano. Just as scripture speaks to me differently at different times of my life, so it is with music and the words of hymns. Do you have a favorite hymn? Which hymn (or verse) spoke to you during worship last Sunday? Which words challenged you? Which words gave you peace?

Let us pray: *Dear God, Thank you for the gifts of Word and music. Help us to “**declare your steadfast love in the morning and your faithfulness by night...For you, O Lord, have made me glad by your work; at the works of your hands I sing for joy.**” Amen.*

