

Devotions – September 13-19, 2015
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Sunday, Sept. 13, 2015

Suggested reading: Genesis 1:27; Psalm 139-13-16; John 20:21-23

The LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. – Genesis 2:7

Breath of Life

One Monday afternoon, five years ago, my doctor called my office and told me I needed to get into the ER asap! "You're right lung is 80% collapsed!" she exclaimed.

"Amazing," I thought. "How in the world am I still moving around!?" I thank God that I was given two lungs - one of which was still working just fine.

When I went into the ER, the medical staff prepped me and inserted a chest tube. The air being released sounded like a balloon that had been blown up and then let go.

Oh! So that's why I was having so much pressure in my back! And, here I had gone to a chiropractor for the first time a few days before that. Having never had back problems, nor any idea about a spontaneous pneumothorax - I thought I just needed an "adjustment" - as chiropractors call it.

Well, I certainly did need an adjustment! As the medical staff took care of me, and prayers were lifted by family and friends, I began a healing process that brought back more than a collapsed lung. As the *breath of life* was being renewed within me, God worked through quiet moments in the hospital to bring me peace; and through the many people He sent me to renew my Spirit as well.

Up until just a couple years before that incident, I had been a workaholic, bringing work home, and smoking like a chimney in my home office ... Yes; I was burning out my *breath of life* in more ways than one.

If you ever find yourself or loved one in such a situation, where the "candle is burning at both ends," may Jesus' peace be with you and may God breathe new life into you as well.

Let us pray: *Creating God, we praise you because we are fearfully and wonderfully made. Help us to take care of what you have created in us - and not abuse ourselves. Amen.*



Monday, Sept. 14, 2015

Suggested Reading: John 9:1-12; 24-25

"I have come into this world, so that the blind will see" - John 9:39

I Can See Clearly Now

Having some time off of work recently, I decided to tackle one of my least favorite chores ... washing windows. It was a bright, sun-shiny kind of day outside - but not quite so when looking through our windows. Upon cleaning the windows, I realized that it wasn't just the windows that needed a good cleaning - but the screens too. As I often find, a good cleaning means more than just surface work.

While I washed and cleaned, the song, "I Can See Clearly Now" (by Johnny Nash) came to mind. Although I do not profess to be able to "see all the obstacles in my way" - I do see much better than before I started.

Like the blind man whom Jesus healed, I reflected. This period of unemployment might just be a healing opportunity for me as well - to get away and see things clearer.

Digging into the blind man's story with renewed vision, I find the words "come" and "sent" and "went" speaking to me more than ever before.

Like Jesus telling his disciples: "As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me." (John 9:4)

And to the blind man: "Go" he told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam" (this word means Sent). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing. (John 9:6-7).

And "I have come into this world, so that the blind will see" (John 9:25).

The blind man's testimony made him an evangelist. May we learn from him, through our own trials and testimonies - and do the work of Him who sends us.

Let us pray: *Thank you, Jesus, for bringing light into our world. Help us to wash off the mud and see past the obstacles - as you would have us see. Amen.*



Tuesday, Sept. 15, 2015

Suggested Reading: Ephesians 5:1-2; 2 Corinthians 2:15-16

For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ - 2 Corinthians 2:15

Fragrant Offerings

"Oh! Yea!" I exclaimed to my brother and sister, as we arrived home from school, "Mom made cookies!"

I knew that as soon as I opened the door - for the aroma hit me before I ever saw Mom or the kitchen. And what a pleasing aroma it was! To this day, whenever I smell newly baked chocolate chip cookies, I fondly remember Mom's loving offerings.

What an amazing sense that is - invoking memories so vividly just by smelling something. And, our sense of smell invokes more than memories ...

Just consider the explosion of aromatherapy products these days. Certain scents, like jasmine and lavender, can help a person to relax; others, like lemon and rosemary, can be rejuvenating and uplifting.

But, the best aroma of all is the aroma that pleases God. In the book of Leviticus, Chapters 1-3, we find numerous times where burnt offerings were to be presented in a manner that brought an aroma pleasing to the Lord.

Then, in Ephesians 5:2 we learn that the aroma that pleases God comes when we "walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."

Let us pray: *Loving God, help us to bring You glory by sharing the pleasing aroma of Christ among all souls we touch. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*



Wednesday, Sept. 16, 2015

Suggested Reading: Luke 8:4-8

Apply your heart to instruction and your ears to words of knowledge. - Proverbs 23:12

Horton Hears a Who

Until just a couple years ago, my grandson, who is now 15, just loved the story "Horton Hears a Who".

As one of the physically smallest kids in his class through elementary and junior high school, he viewed Horton as a hero - a character to look up to and resemble.

Horton's mission was to help those with a small voice - "for a person's a person, no matter how small."

Now, in high school, my grandson has sprouted in growth - and is great with little ones; and listening for and reaching out to those who have "small voices" - or a hard time speaking up for themselves.

Hearing requires focused listening. With all the distractions surrounding us everyday - it can be extremely difficult to focus - and to hear God.

I believe Jesus and his disciples experienced a world of distractions as well. In his Parable of the Sower, he identifies birds that ate up the seed, rocks that prevented roots to develop, and thorns that choked out the plants. Several times in the Gospels, and to each of the seven churches in the province of Asia (Rev. 2-3), we find Him saying:

"Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear."

How might we use our ears to truly hear? First of all, as God instructs us in Psalm 46:10, we must: *"Be still, and know that I am God."*

That means making a conscious effort to be with who we are with - turning off phones and/or other electronic devices that distract.

How can we hear a gentle whisper - or the smallest of voices, if we have a bunch of other noise muffling it out?

Let us pray: *God of All Consciousness, help us to focus our listening and use our ears to hear even the gentlest of whispers and smallest of voices that You would have us hear. Amen.*



Thursday, Sept. 17, 2015

Suggested reading: Psalm 34:8-14 (NIV)

How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! - Psalm 119:103

Taste and See

"That's spicy!" our 2-year old granddaughter exclaims when she puts something in her mouth that is not to her liking. Now, for me - spicy is good, as long as it's not fiery hot.

I give her credit for trying things though. Taste and see is her method for exploring what's good or not. So many of us get it set in our minds that something is not good, and won't even try things if there is even a trace of that something in it.

I am trying to learn from her - as I do with all youth in my life. I love to try things with them, see things as they do - with a fresh new look.

That is also how I love to read and explore God's Word; always seeking something new in each passage; a different way to look at it, through daily devotionals and/or sharing with another person; exploring the context, the chapter, the maps, references and cross-references.

"Taste and see" the psalmist says ... "How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!"

Is there a new way for you to "taste and see" God's Word?

Let us pray: *O Jesus, help us to explore and share Your Word with a renewed "taste and see" attitude. Amen.*



Friday, Sept. 18, 2015

Suggested reading: Mark 5:25-34 (NIV)

He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering." - Mark 5:34

"One Touch"

"Please play 'One Touch' by Nicole Mullen," Kaige asks.

"This is the song that I want for my baptismal theme," she adds.

I also love this song that brings to life the story of the woman "subject to bleeding" which is found in three of the Gospels.

Now Kaige is one of the young ladies who attend a youth group I minister to at a local detention facility. She nicknamed herself Kaige because she has been locked up or in foster care for most of her life.

Like the woman "subject to bleeding" who had spent 12 years as an "unclean" woman due to her condition, and would have been very used to being alone, Kaige could relate, as she too felt quite alone and ostracized in her life.

How appropriate that this would be a baptismal theme for her - someone needing Jesus' loving touch in her life ... And to hear Jesus say to her:

"Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering."

Is there anyone in your life that might need Jesus' loving touch today? Is there some way that you might bring the healing power of Jesus to that person?

Let us pray: *Healing Jesus, we thank you for freeing us from our suffering. Guide us and empower us to help heal your children who are still suffering - and just need one touch. Amen.*

A video of Nicole Mullen's song "One Touch" - can be found at:
<http://www.godtube.com/watch/?v=92B0BJNU>



Saturday, Sept. 19, 2015

Suggested reading: 1 Corinthians 12:18-27 (NIV)

As it is, there are many parts, but one body. - 1 Corinthians 12:20

After exploring our senses over this past week, let's explore how each of them might apply to the many parts, but one body that makes up our church ...

What is the breath of life in our church?

Do we have eyes that see as Jesus would have us see?

What do people see when they look at our congregation?

How about when they see our members in the community?

Is there a special aroma that comes to mind when someone thinks of our church?

Are we a pleasing aroma to God? Do we live God's love?

What does our worship service sound like?

Do we have ears that hear? Is that evident by how we act when we leave church?

Do we have a "taste and see" attitude?

Or are we stagnated somewhere in our congregation?

Do we reach out and touch others?

Let us pray: *God, we thank you for the many parts that make up our body. Help us to appreciate each part and explore how best to use what you have gifted us with to do the work that you have sent us to do. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

