

**Devotions – September 20-26, 2015**  
**Pastor Kenneth Lahnors**  
**Trinity Lutheran Church, Ishpeming, MI**

**Sunday, September 20, 2015**

Suggested readings: Genesis 3; Luke 22:39-46, 23:32-40

*He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.—Genesis 3:24*

Were you ever grounded, did you ever lose a privilege, when you were young (or not so young)? Perhaps because of your behavior you were not allowed to stay up late or go out in the evenings. Adam and Eve lost their privilege, in a profound way, because of their sin. Yet their behavior wasn't a mere mistake in judgment. It was a conscious defiance of God's will, an attempt to take his place. And because this defiance went against the whole structure of the cosmos, the intimate relationship they had with God was broken and they were exiled from their home in the garden.

Yet that was not the end. Many years later, in a different garden, a man surrendered himself fully to God's will so that, even though it cost himself everything, humanity could again enter into intimacy with God. From that garden this man Jesus, God's begotten Son, went to the cross, which has become for us the tree of life, opening for us the gate to our eternal home in God's garden.

Let us pray: *Heavenly Father, thank you for the sacrifice of your Son on the cross to forgive the sin of the world. May your Holy Spirit help us to follow your will, that Paradise will again be our home. Amen*



**Monday, September 21, 2015**

Suggested readings: Genesis 22:1-14; John 1:29; Hebrews 11:17-19

*Abraham said, "God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son."—Genesis 22:8*

This story is difficult for us on so many levels. What kind of God would ask his servant to sacrifice—to kill and burn—his own son, especially when elsewhere he says such an action is forbidden? Could you have done what Abraham did? If you've ever been in one of those extreme situations where it seemed as if all hope was lost, you may know what Abraham went through. Surely God's command contradicted his earlier promise that Isaac would be the father

of Abraham's descendants. Yet Abraham trusted in God in spite of all that. The author of Hebrews states that Abraham believed that God would still keep his promise, even to the extent of raising Isaac from the dead. We are called to trust God's promises even as we bear the heaviest of crosses.

The whole notion of bloody sacrifices may also seem strange for us, yet apparently our alienation from God is so deep that blood is, in a sense, required. The requirement is strong enough so that God provided a substitute for Isaac. Yet the Holy Trinity's love for the world is also deeper than our understanding. For the Son of God chose to be our substitute sacrifice, our lamb, who takes away the sin of the world. God provides for you all things, not only your daily needs, but the way to eternal life.

Let us pray: *Heavenly Father, help us, like Abraham, to trust your promises regardless of the difficult trials you lead us through. Keep our eyes always on Jesus, the lamb who died for our sake. Amen*



**Tuesday, September 22, 2015**

Suggested readings: Genesis 28:10-22; John 1:51

*And he dreamed, and behold, there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven. And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it!—Genesis 28:12*

I wouldn't say I'm afraid of heights. Maybe very cautious. Regardless, I don't fool around when I'm on a ladder. I usually climb slowly and deliberately, and really take my time getting off at the top. A ladder to heaven? That might be a little too far to climb. I think I would probably pass it up along with Jack's beanstalk, no matter what they told me was waiting at the top.

There have been numerous interpretations of Jacob's ladder over the years. Most of them tell us that each good deed or act of denial brings us a rung or two higher to heaven. Maybe that means that I wouldn't get too high, since my sins would bring me back down several rungs. Ancient Jewish interpretations often held that the ladder was the sacrifices and prayers offered in the temple, or it was the Torah, God's Word given on Mount Sinai. Jesus tells us that he is this ladder. He encompasses all the other interpretations. He is God's Word, he is the final sacrifice, he is the perfect, sinless one. He is God become man, bridging heaven and earth for us. By clinging to him, we are promised we will get to heaven, regardless of our fear of heights.

Let us pray: *Heavenly Father, help us hold fast to Jesus, that he may carry us into your presence. Amen*



## Wednesday, September 23, 2015

Suggested readings: Exodus 17:1-7; John 7:37-38, 19:31-37

*“Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink.” - Exodus 17:6*

Imagine that you are out in the desert. You’ve been sweltering under the hot sun for days and you are running out of water. You know you need to locate some soon. How will you find it? What will you look for? You’ll keep your eyes open for trees and grass, anything that looks green. What you will not be looking for is rocks. Water doesn’t come from rocks.

Yet, God provided water for his people Israel from a rock, the most unlikely of places, to show them that he provides all their needs, to teach them to trust him. Moses struck the rock, and water, life-giving water, poured forth and refreshed them all. God is referred to over and over in the Scriptures as our Rock, a place of refuge but also the one who provides for us. Jesus declared himself to be the source of living water. As he hung on the cross, the soldier struck his side and water poured out with blood. Jesus seemed like an unlikely source for water. As a dead criminal, he seemed to have as much to offer the world as a rock. But he is our God, our rock, and he was struck to give us life.

*Let us pray: Heavenly Father, thank you for your Son Jesus, who was struck and died to give us the water of life. Help us to trust you for all that we need. Amen*



## Thursday, September 24, 2015

Suggested readings: Numbers 21: 4-9; John 3:14-15

*And the LORD said to Moses, “Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live.”—Numbers 21:8*

I find remarkable the process of creating vaccines and serums. A weakened form of a disease-causing organism is injected in a person to create immunity. Or in the case of serums, diluted venom is injected into an animal which then produce antibodies to be harvested and later injected into a person who has received a venomous bite. God is using a somewhat similar principle in our reading today of bringing healing through something deadly. A statue of a snake offers healing to those bitten by snakes. Yet the big difference is that there is no injection, no touching. There is simply looking, looking in faith.

This is understood as one of the clearest foreshadowing of Jesus’ cross. Jesus himself speaks of his being lifted up like the serpent on the pole, so that anyone who believes in him would have

eternal life. The cross is a symbol of sin and death, but our Savior's death on it has saved us from our sin and death.

Let us pray: *Heavenly Father, thank you for your Son Jesus, whose death on the cross frees us from death. Help us to look to him in faith every day. Amen*



### **Friday, September 25, 2015**

Suggested readings: 2 Kings 13:20-21; John 5:19-29

*And as a man was being buried, behold, a marauding band was seen and the man was thrown into the grave of Elisha, and as soon as the man touched the bones of Elisha, he revived and stood on his feet.—2 Kings 13:21*

When was the last time you touched a dead plant with another dead plant and the second one greened up and started sprouting leaves again? Not going to happen. In our world, except for the much longer process of decay and rejuvenation, death does not bring forth life. And though we trust in a coming resurrection, this story about Elisha seems rather odd. How can a dead person come back to life simply by accidentally touching a dead prophet? It seems rather magical.

The Biblical understanding of all this centers around holiness. Holiness refers to that which is set apart, pure, complete, and whole. God is ultimate holiness. Holiness means life. And holiness is contagious. Those who come into contact with what is holy become, in some measure, holy themselves. The prophet Elisha received holiness through his communion with God. The newly dead man “caught” Elisha’s holiness and came back to life. This story is also a foreshadowing of Christ, whose holiness healed and raised to life many through his touch and his word. So we too “catch” the holiness of Christ, the one who died and rose to life, as we receive baptism, as we hear his gospel, as we take his supper. For he is the one touching us with these things, and through them we are given eternal life.

Let us pray: *Heavenly Father, you are holy and by your holiness we live. Help us to ever be in contact with your Son Jesus, who died and rose again, that we might rise to new life. Amen*



### **Saturday, September 26, 2015**

Suggested readings: Jonah 1-2; Matthew 12:38-40; Luke 24:44-48

*And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.—Jonah 1:17*

We confess in the Nicene Creed, “On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures.” But where do the Scriptures—by which is meant the Old Testament—refer to Jesus’ resurrection after three days? The clearest statement is from Jonah. Jesus himself said that as Jonah was three days in the whale, so he would be three days in the earth.

Unlike Jesus, Jonah ended up in the fish because he was running from God. Perhaps you can relate to that. Perhaps you were resisting God until finally you were brought to a place of deep darkness where you had nowhere else to turn. Jonah’s prayer from the belly of the fish are the words of one who has lost his life, who has gone down into the deep, into the grave, and who from a place of hopelessness cries out to God in faith. Jesus entered our hopelessness as he went to the cross and entered the grave. But the third day came and he arose! He has taken the sting from death and he promises us eternal life in himself! Hallelujah!

Let us pray: *Heavenly Father, your Son died and rose for us. When we are in the pits, hear our cry to you and lift us up, reminding us that because Christ lives, we shall live too. Amen*

