

Devotions – February 14-20, 2016

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Sunday, February 14, 2016

Text: John 3:16

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.”

This is a special day in our land called “Valentine’s Day.” We have been hearing about this for the past several weeks wherever we have traveled in our communities. But when we encounter the love of God for the world and the gift of His Son, and what that means for believers all over the world, love has a much larger audience. God’s message is not seasonal, but always.

Once again during the season of Lent, we follow Jesus’ journey to the cross and resurrection – truly a journey of love for the world and all who believe in him. His love is all over the world as His followers bring His love to the needs of people:

- In small remote villages or large urban areas;
- Where folks are in need or crisis, maybe food or water or clothing;
- When the sick are consoled and prayed with;
- When the dying are anointed and eternal life awaits.

Each week we meet our loving Lord in His sacrament. Having been forgiven and strengthened, we can be a part of sharing His love. Consider what you might do to spread His love each day and above all...

Let us pray: *Dear God, we thank you for the love and blessing you have given us. Help us to be caring for others this day and every day. Amen.*



Monday, February 15, 2016

Text: Matthew 22:37-40

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

When questioned, our Lord offered these words which we might take to heart as we continue our Lenten journey.

How can we love God with all our heart, soul and mind in this day and time? What do you think is meant by heart or soul or mind? Is it our feelings, our thoughts, or our very being?

Why not try this: Upon getting up in the morning, start with Martin Luther's Morning Prayer (check your catechism if you have one). Go through each day considering what loving God means in your daily journey. At the end of the day, before closing your eyes, conclude the day with prayer, maybe Martin Luther's Evening Prayer (also found in the catechism).

Some of us have mission statements and this is the one I try to follow: "Love God, Love Others, and Make a Difference."

Let us pray: *Help us all, dear Lord, to make love a guide to you and to others each day. Amen.*



Tuesday, February 16, 2016

Text: Proverbs 15:1

"A soft answer turns away wrath but a harsh word stirs up anger."

As one delves into scripture, there are some words that seem appropriate at a certain time and place.

When I was in Confirmation class many years ago, my pastor asked each member of my class to select a Bible verse which would be a part of the placing of hands on each confirmand. When my pastor and parents placed their hands on my head while kneeling before the altar, these words were read followed by the prayer and blessing.

I don't remember why I selected this verse, but I have not always remembered these words especially when a harsh word seemed to be on my mind or lips.

In our world today there is much bitterness, antagonism and anger with many harsh words spoken. How do we change this? As we examine our lives this Lenten season, let us be aware of what a soft answer or comment can do, and use them to honor and respect those we change to meet.

Let us pray: *Dear God, may the words and actions of our lives be pleasing to you and to others. Amen.*



Wednesday, February 17, 2016

Text: Matthew 19:14

“...but Jesus said: ‘Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.’”

It is always a joy to have children attend worship services, participate in weekday or Sunday School education, as well as the children’s meditations.

Children bring their enthusiasm, their energy and many times their questions to these settings. I used a children’s sermon theme in one congregation whereby each week a child was given a large paper bag. That particular child was to bring it back the next week with something in it to help me, the pastor, tell the congregation something about Jesus. When the time came one Sunday, a young boy gave the bag to me. I opened the bag. It was empty. This puzzled me. I asked him if he forgot something at home. The child responded, “It’s empty because it means Jesus rose from the dead.”

Children are wonderful messengers of Jesus. They have many gifts to offer when they are very young. As they grow older they can be involved in mission trips, do service projects, participate on Church Councils, and perhaps feel God’s calling to be a pastor. Let all of these younger folks come to us and let us come to them. Together everyone is blessed.

Let us pray: *Dear Heavenly Father, let us remember that we are all your children from the time we were born until the time we are welcomed into your heavenly home. Amen.*



Thursday, February 18, 2016

Text: Matthew 4:18-19

“As Jesus walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea – for they were fishermen. And he said to them, ‘Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.’”

Scripture mentions many people who answered Jesus’ call. Over the years folks of varying backgrounds and personalities have answered the call. A rich business man I came to know sat on the edge of a hospital bed and said, “I owe everything to my Lord.” A young woman who had many health issues and limited work said to me, “I try to give 10% to my Church.” The pastor of my home church wrote a not to me which I still remember, “I hope you will go into the ministry.” I did become a pastor. Unfortunately he did not see that fulfilled as he and his wife were killed in a car accident.

As followers of our Lord, how are you answering the call you have from our Lord which started with your baptism? What can you do as a follower of Jesus?

Let us pray: *Gracious God, help us to walk with you this day and every day. Amen.*



Friday, February 19, 2016

Text: Joshua 1:9

"I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."

Today on the world scene it seems there are many harmful things going on. We hear about these events from the media, or various conversations in public places. Many are tired or frustrated by this and wonder what will happen next. The above verse has God giving these words to the prophet Joshua. There is merit in these words for us to consider in the midst of what is happening today. No matter what the world scene is like, God's presence is there. If your life is facing some challenges, whatever that may be, God is there for you. As we live each day, may we turn to him in prayer, in worship, in service, and in our families of faith as we encounter our experiences in life.

Let us pray: *Thank you, Lord, for the gift of your Son Jesus and his presence. Help us to never feel alone. In your name we pray. Amen.*



Saturday, February 20, 2016

Text: Hebrews 13:8

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."

We live in a changing world. New things keep happening along with challenges that confront us. There are disease outbreaks, natural disasters, and community needs. There is hunger, global warming – and the list seems to get longer. As we get older, things aren't like they used to be 20 or 10 or even five years ago.

This verse reminds us that Jesus is always there, as he was yesterday, today, and even into the future. When we began our baptismal journeys, with the Water and the Word, the sign of the cross was marked on our foreheads, making us children of God. Today he is present when we receive him in the elements of Holy Communion, and we will be with him in the future as we celebrate the joy of Easter.

Whatever the past or the present or future, we are called upon to live his love in service this day and those ahead. I have a note above my desk that says every day is a good day to have a good day! With God's presence, it truly is!

Let us pray: *Come, Lord Jesus, and be our Guest....Amen.*

