

**Devotions – June 19-25, 2016**

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**Sunday, June 19, 2016**

Text: *John 14:5, 6 (RSV)*

***“Thomas said to him, ‘Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?’ Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’”***

I am directionally challenged! When I’m told to turn east, I have to really think about which way I should turn! Without my trusty OnStar in my Chevy, I would avoid driving anyplace unfamiliar by myself. But with my turn-by-turn navigation system, I always know where I’m going and I can get help anytime from an OnStar advisor. Sound like a commercial? Well, I’m sold!

Wouldn’t it be great if we had an advisor to help us navigate through life and show us the way? Wait a minute – we do! Jesus is that guide. The words of Jesus recorded in scripture and reports of his actions and attitudes direct us in the way we should go.

Today begins the first week of youth camping at Fortune Lake Lutheran Camp. High schoolers have found their way to Fortune Lake and will live together in a Christian community for six days. These teenagers may not admit it, but they are looking for direction. This summer, the theme is “The Jesus Way.” No foolproof navigation system will be implemented, but through discussion, worship, play, and prayer, campers and staff will explore and practice living “The Jesus Way.”

Let us pray: *Holy Navigator, your life provides a guide for our lives. Although we often think we don’t need direction and are determined to do things our way, we want more than the help of an OnStar advisor on our life’s journey. We want and need you as our guide. Help us follow “The Jesus Way.” Amen.*



**Monday, June 20, 2016**

Text: *Matthew 6:5-9*

***“Whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others... When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be***

***heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Pray then in this way ...*** (you know the rest!)

First, a confession. I don't like praying aloud before groups. Public speaking doesn't always bother me, but praying in public does! I guess I worry that I won't be eloquent enough or that I might actually blurt out an ungrammatical phrase! I admire those polished pray-ers who can deliver poignant prayer petitions, but I'm not one of them. So I'm thankful that Jesus gave us a simple but powerful prayer that fits all occasions.

The campers and staff at Fortune Lake are focusing on "Praying the Jesus Way" today. Praying at camp may sound quite different from praying at worship in your congregation. Table graces may be sung to super hero theme songs and some prayers in chapel or around the campfire may invite calling out single words in creative chaos. But the Lord's Prayer is still the foundation for all other types of prayers. Here is how one camper describes a prayer experience that has become a recent tradition at Fortune Lake.

*"When it's time for the Lord's Prayer at a campfire worship, everyone knows what to do. The entire group lowers their voices to nothing. All are silent until one of the leaders begins the prayer at a whisper. With every word, we get louder and louder until we are screaming at the top of our lungs. We want God to hear us."*

Whether we pray simply and silently in the privacy of our beds or shout the words that Jesus taught us to pray with a crowd, God will hear us.

Let us pray the RSV version of the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6: 9-13): *Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one. Amen.*



**Tuesday, June 21, 2016**

Text: *Luke 19:2-5*

***"A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was rich. He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not...so he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him. When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, 'Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today.'"***

This familiar story about the short, unpopular tax collector has unique significance for campers at Fortune Lake this summer. When they hear that Zacchaeus climbed up in a sycamore

tree, they will certainly make a connection with the four new tree houses that have just been built for the Vagabond and Night Owl programs. Besides being the coolest lodging on camp, the tree houses give campers a new treetop perspective ten feet above their usual vantage point.

Zacchaeus needed to see his life in a new way, and when he took Jesus' message to heart, he changed his ways. According to the verses that follow, he promised to give half of his possessions to the poor and pay back anyone he had defrauded in the past. Zacchaeus was introduced to living his life "The Jesus Way."

But Z. wasn't the only one who learned something that day. When Jesus invited himself to Z.'s house, others who saw it "grumbled!" They didn't think Jesus should hang out with sinners! But Jesus reminded his critics that Z. was also a son of Abraham. In other words, Z. was a child of God and their neighbor, whom they should love! Ouch!

We can probably identify with either Zacchaeus or the critics. Like Zacchaeus, we may need to look at our lives from a new perspective. Sometimes we don't see the forest for the trees! And, like Jesus' critics, we should look at those "neighbors" that we consider more sinful than we are and work on loving them – even if we don't like them.

After all, it's "The Jesus Way!"

Let us pray: *Lord of sycamore trees and tree houses, enable us to view our world from a new perspective. Help us to rise above the self-centered nature of our own lives and see a new way to live. Curb our grumbling criticism of others and help us see them as our neighbors and part of the family of God. Amen.*



**Wednesday, June 22, 2016**

Text: *Luke 7:47-50*

***“Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which were many, have been forgiven; hence she has shown great love.’ Then he said to her, ‘Your sins are forgiven.’ But those who were at the table with him began to say among themselves, ‘Who is this who even forgives sins?’ And he said to the woman, ‘Your faith has saved you; go in peace.’”***

Once again, in this scripture passage an individual has been introduced to “The Jesus Way” and is forgiven for her past indiscretions. She responds with loving actions because she has been relieved of a heavy burden. And again, the critics grumble about Jesus' decision to receive her gestures of kindness and question his quick response to forgive her sins. How dare he!

When campers at Fortune Lake reach this hump-day lesson in their camping experience, they will have lived with cabin buddies in close quarters for three days and nights. Living in community – even Christian community – is not easy!

Each camper carries more than physical baggage to camp. They come from diverse families that use a wide variety of parenting styles. Group leaders, who become instant parents when their campers arrive, quickly learn that parenting isn't all fun and games! They may have to referee arguments and lead serious conversations about forgiveness. As staff members, these young adults may also have conflicts with other staffers. Pastor Tracy then becomes the mediator who must help resolve the issues and talk about forgiveness.

Even when we sincerely try to live "The Jesus Way," we still make mistakes and take wrong turns. When my car's navigation system notes that my vehicle has left the designated route, the computer voice asks if I want to change the route or if I need help. Forgiveness is the help we need to continue our journey living "The Jesus Way."

Let us pray: *Forgiving Lord, forgive us our sins in the same way that we forgive those who sin against us. Then, like the woman who was forgiven, we also may go on our way in peace. Amen.*



**Thursday, June 23, 2016**

Text: Mathew 15:32, 36-37

***"Then Jesus called his disciples to him and said, 'I have compassion for the crowd, because they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat; and I do not want to send them away hungry' ... Then he took the seven loaves and the fish; and after giving thanks he broke them and gave them to the disciples...And all of them ate and were filled."***

The crowd had been with Jesus for several days. Although they may have brought a few supplies with them, they certainly had run out of food by this time. And there was no MacDonald's or supermarket around the corner. Jesus understood that they were hungry for more than his teaching. He was sensitive to their physical needs and decided to feed them. It was Jesus' way and it should be our way as well.

This familiar story of feeding a crowd with meager resources is the basis of the ELCA's World Hunger Appeal. If we, who have so much, share just a bit of our bountiful resources, there will be enough for all.

But most of us don't know what it feels like to go without food – even for a few extra hours. Many years ago, when the summer camp theme was "Enough for All," the staff planned a special meal that would help the campers understand the problem of food distribution across the globe. The name of a particular country or area of the world was assigned to each table in the dining hall. The campers then drew the name of the country and table to which they were assigned (a random chance).

The amount of food delivered to each table corresponded to the level of abundance each country experiences. The USA and western European countries had extra platters of every item and third-world countries received only a few crackers and a little water that looked cloudy. It

was kind of a social experiment to see how the campers would react and how long it would take the wealthy countries to share with their neighbors in need. I hope this experience influenced their generosity as they grew into adulthood.

Let us pray: *Compassionate Lord, you are aware of the needs of all your children across the globe. We have access to more than our fair share. Instill in us a desire to be compassionate and generous like you. Amen.*



**Friday, June 24, 2016**

Text: *John 13:2-5*

***“During supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him.”***

Jesus’ action in this scene portrays him as a humble servant, doing a menial task. Jesus had earned a reputation as a great preacher and teacher, but he didn’t set himself above service. In fact, when Simon Peter questioned the propriety of having his feet washed by the great teacher, Jesus answered, “You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand.” (vs. 7) Jesus would become the suffering servant.

Service is an important component of the Christian lifestyle. For years, taking soup and casseroles to ill or grieving individuals was common practice; providing luncheons after funerals is still customary in many congregations. Although the casserole tradition may be fading, service to others has expanded from the neighborhood to the global community.

Today, the ELCA “God’s work. Our hands.” campaign encourages congregations to participate in service projects both inside and outside their church walls. Whether spending an hour raking an elderly neighbor’s lawn or working for several weeks building a house with Habitat for Humanity, we are using our hands to do God’s work. And we can’t forget the major contribution Lutheran World Relief makes sending thousands of quilts, health and school kits, and dollars to areas in need.

Friday is departure day from camp, so there isn’t time to do a specific service project at camp, but campers will be sent on their way inspired to follow Jesus’ way by doing God’s work with their hands.

Let us pray: *Servant Lord, we want to make a difference! Following your humble example, we will live generously by giving our time, talents, and resources to serve others. Amen*



**Saturday, June 25, 2016**

Text: *Ephesians 5:1-2.*

***“Be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us.”***

Today is Saturday. The high school campers (and staff) are probably sleeping in, exhausted after their week at Fortune Lake. Visions of paddling a canoe back from the Tuesday overnight, performing silly skits and sharing serious talent at the “Fortune Lake Live Show” linger amidst memories of smoky campfires, buzzing mosquitoes, tasty pudgie pies, and strains of favorite camp tunes.

Both campers and staff experienced a bit of the kingdom of God living in Christian community. It wasn't a perfect communion because no one was perfect. There were probably some conflicts, some frustrations and some heartache. But they strived to follow “The Jesus Way,” by following Jesus' example, thus being imitators of God.

They learned to pray “The Jesus way;” they were challenged to look at their neighbors from a new perspective, with love; they experienced both sides of forgiveness, giving and receiving; they were reminded of the needs of a hungry world; they were sent out to serve, to do God's work with their hands.

How could humans ever learn how to act as children of God without having Jesus as a living example to show the way? Jesus even placed God's law in a new perspective by giving one over-riding commandment: “Love one another.” We will make some wrong turns on our life's journey, but with Jesus as our navigation advisor guiding our way, we will return to the path of faith.

Let us pray: *Lord of life, you know that we live in a world influenced by greed, fear, and power. Inspire us to live the Jesus way, as “imitators of God, as beloved children, and love, as you love us.” Amen.*

