

Devotions – July 24-30, 2016
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Sunday, July 24, 2016

Text: Psalm 104: 24-28

*O Lord, how manifold are your works!
In wisdom you have made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures.
Yonder is the sea, great and wide,
creeping things innumerable are there,
living things both small and great.
There go the ships,
and Leviathan that you formed to sport in it. (NRSV)*

It is the middle of July in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. The water of the Great Lakes is a color of blue that needs more adjectives to clearly describe its beauty. Or the many shades of green that cover the hills when the trees are all leafed out. Nature must truly have been the inspiration for the many different blue and green crayons in the 64 pack of Crayola crayons! Standing at the water's edge, we hear the gentle lapping of waves along the shore. Our senses can be overwhelmed, as well they should be, by the beauty and wonder of the world around us. We often race past these wonders without a second glance. Today, let's slow our busy lives down a few minutes to allow the peaceful beauty of our surroundings to refresh us. Then turn to the creator of it all and offer our thanks and praise.

Let us pray: *O God, creative genius of our world, we give you thanks for this wonderful place you have made for us. Help us to be wise and imaginative caretakers of your creation and take more time to appreciate all of its majesty and beauty. Amen.*



Monday, July 25, 2016

Text: Psalm 62: 5-7

But I stand silently before the Lord, waiting for him to rescue me. For salvation comes from him alone. Yes, he alone is my Rock, my rescuer, defense and fortress-why then should I be tense with fear when troubles come? My protection and success come from God alone. He is my refuge, a Rock where no enemy can reach me. (LB)

The clear blue lake I drove by yesterday is different today. It is an angry grey color with big waves that crash against the rocky shore. The water is no longer peaceful and refreshing. It causes fear because of its power and threat of danger. But I am standing on the shore. I am safe. Why don't I feel safe? Several heartbreaking events have happened recently that remind me of this feeling that comes over me when I am near tumultuous waters. Unexplainable violence, killings, heartbreaks, lives destroyed, human hearts broken by anger and fear. Where can we stand in safety and where can we look for understanding? The answer is God alone.

Let us pray: *Our Father, who loves all people beyond our understanding, forgive our prejudice, fear and anger toward each other. Be our rock and our refuge when danger is around us and give us hearts that are able to show your great love to all your children. Amen*



Tuesday, July 26, 2016

Text: **Psalm 43:3-4**

*O send out your light and your truth;
let them lead me;
let them bring me to your holy hill
and to your dwelling.
Then I will go to the altar of God,
to God my exceeding joy;
and I will praise you with the harp,
O God, my God. (NRSV)*

I am not a boat person. When traveling, I like to know where I'm going and have a good sense of how I'm going to get there. Just thinking about sailing across open water, ties my stomach in knots. That may be a contributing factor to my interest in visiting old lighthouses. I am amazed that ships would rely on lighthouses to direct their courses. Open waters do not have roadmaps and safety turnouts that highway travel provides for us today. Ship captains would rely on directing lights during the night and the tall pillars of lighthouses to identify landmarks during the day. Friends assure me that technology today has provided travel maps to direct boaters much like our car GPS unit that gets me safely through (or around) the Twin Cities. But I like to know the landmarks that I drive by and I'm reassured as I pass them. Like ship captains and lighthouses, I look for a sign that I am still heading in the right direction.

Let us pray: *Heavenly Father, send out your light and your truth. Let me be led by them and find myself at your holy hill, then into your dwelling, my place of safety and rest. Amen.*



Wednesday, July 27, 2016

Text: **Psalm 3: 3-6**

*But you, God, shield me on all sides;
You ground my feet, you lift my head high;
With all my might I shout up to God,
His answers thunder from the holy mountain.
I stretch myself out. I sleep.
Then I'm up again-rested, tall and steady,
Fearless before the enemy mobs
Coming at me from all sides. (MSG)*

One of my favorite lighthouse experiences is the night we stayed as “keepers” of the lighthouse in Two Harbors, Minnesota. It was not a real difficult job, with an absolutely beautiful view of Lake Superior on a calm sunny day. Although I have not lived near this lake, I am well aware of the fearsome power her waves can produce and the dangers they present to those on the water. So we took on our tasks and responsibilities with the seriousness they deserved. We logged the weather conditions, and ships seen through the binoculars heading toward the harbor. We checked the lamp to make sure it was doing its job (thanks also to Coast Guard automation!) and the fog horn was also in working order. Final check done, we slept until our turn at morning watch.

How often do the responsibilities we carry from day to day seem a burden too heavy to bear? We don't even put them down during the night, and we are exhausted each morning facing another long day with the same burdens. Shout up to God with the psalmist. Hear his thunderous reply, “I will keep watch,” then stretch out and rest.

Let us pray: *Ever-watchful Father, thank you for sharing my burdens and providing the gift of rest. I am ready to face the trials of today with my feet on the ground and my head lifted high, confident your watchful presence will shield me on all sides. Amen.*



Thursday, July 28, 2016

Text: **Psalm 25: 4-7**

Show me the path where I should go, O Lord; point out the right road for me to walk. Lead me; teach me; for you are the God who gives me salvation. I have no hope except in you. Overlook my youthful sins, O Lord! Look at me instead through eyes of mercy and forgiveness, through eyes of everlasting love and kindness. (LB)

It's probably been about ten years now that I have been fascinated with the structure of lighthouses, the lives of their keepers and the place they have in our history. Especially in an area like this! We are surrounded on three sides by water that is used for transportation, industry and recreation. Much of what I learned and experienced about lighthouses found parallels in my

faith walk. The firm foundation each lighthouse is built on shows me the strength of the presence of God in my life. He is my rock. I can hold on to Him when the storms of life crash all around me. Clinging to this rock, I will not fall. The storms may not be stopped; I may end up soaking wet, but I cannot fall from his presence. The steadfastness of the light at the top reminds me of his constant love. It is continually searching for me to give direction and guide me safely back to shore. I'm not sure why time and again, I leave my solid footing, climb into my own little boat and head out into the enticing waves (I don't even like boats!). Each time I learn again that I cannot handle the waves of life alone. I must return to God for his guidance, his protection and the solid foundation his love provides for my life.

Let us pray: *Steadfast God, thank you for your loving presence in my life. Continue to redirect me when I set off alone in my boat and find myself adrift. Shine your light of love through me so that others may see your goodness and learn of you. Amen.*



Friday, July 29, 2016

Text: **Psalm 69: 1-3**

God, God, save me! I'm in over my head,

Quicksand under me, swamp water over me; I'm going down for the third time.

I'm hoarse from calling for help, Bleary-eyed from searching the sky for God. (MSG)

Last month we took a trip to the gulf coast in Alabama to visit with my Aunt and Uncle. They were so excited to have us there and experience life near the coast. Arrangements were made for all of us to go on a dolphin cruise. Although I met this adventure with some fear and hesitation, it was really fun to see the dolphins jumping playfully in the boat's wake. My confidence was sure with one eye on the life jacket and one hand on the boat rail until we were about fifteen minutes from making it back to shore. The increased speed of our boat was noticed as some folks pointed to the sky and out of nowhere, storm clouds had formed over the ocean waters and were racing us to shore. I have never experienced the suddenness of winds, rain and waves like this. The psalmist's words here were echoed in my heart as we all prayed for the storm to cease and for safe delivery to the shore. As the boat docked and we ran as best we could to the car, businesses were catching chairs and cups that were blowing away as they boarded up windows in a matter of minutes. The wind and rain did not cease, there was no parting of the clouds, but we made it safely to the car to wait together until the storm passed.

Let us pray: *Strong and wise God, you hear our every panicked cry when the storms of life overwhelm us. Help us to be patient when we think our cries fall on deaf ears and realize the peace that comes from knowing when the storm is not stilled you are beside us through it all. Amen.*



Saturday, July 30, 2016

Text: **Psalm 46: 1-3**

God is our refuge and strength,

a very present help in trouble.

Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change,

though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;

though its waters roar and foam,

though the mountains tremble with its tumult. (NRSV)

Have you ever been someplace you probably weren't supposed to be? Maybe there wasn't a fence to keep you out or a "No Trespassing" sign, but you really knew you had no business following the path you found other folks following.

My interest in lighthouses drew me to Port Washington, Wisconsin as a rest stop on one of the trips we made to Chicago. Standing on the shore, I was a bit disappointed because this was not like one of the many restored lighthouses I had visited over the years. This was a light on top of a metal ladder structure at the end of a long cement pier sticking way out into Lake Michigan.

The pier was too long for me to get a good picture of the "lighthouse", without walking out on the pier to get closer. The gentle nudge in my mind reminding me how much I prefer the feeling of ground under my feet and a railing to hang on to, should have been enough to keep me on shore, but seeing folks fishing at the end of the pier shushed my nagging common sense.

Venturing out to get that picture, we were just over half way to the end when a huge wave crashed into the side of the pier and washed over me! Although I was startled and a bit frightened, I knew the path I had to follow and each of my steps landed on firm ground.

I experienced that same startled, frightened feeling recently when I heard some sad news from a friend as chemotherapy begins. But I am comforted by the author of this psalm who reminds me that God is my refuge and strength, no matter the path I must follow.

Let us pray: *Thank you, O God, for being my rock when I've placed myself in the way of giant waves or when I've chosen to stay safely on shore and the giant wave washes over me there. You are my strength and a constant help in my trouble. Amen.*

