

Devotions – September 4-10, 2016

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Sunday, September 4, 2016

Who in the Bible are you? The question was asked in an article in *The Lutheran* magazine of December 2015. Our mutual ministry team took turns for each of us to answer this question. Simple? It would seem so, but I ask you to follow along as I had many considerations before I finally made my choice.

*“Thus he overthrew those cities and the entire plain, including all those living in the cities-and also the vegetation in the land. But Lot’s wife looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.”
Genesis 19:25*

My first thought turned to my easy ability to judge others. This passage is from the story of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. My husband would say that I am very judgmental, sometimes without knowing all the facts or giving people a second chance. At first glance, I was thinking that I was like Old Testament God. You do what I think that you should do or...bam! You are a pillar of salt.

On further thought and study, God was patient and without sin. God did everything to try to save the people, but they did not listen or repent. Am I like God or more like Lot’s wife or like the people of Sodom and Gomorrah?

Let us pray: Dear Lord, help me to be less judgmental and more caring for all of your children. In your Son’s name, Amen.



Monday, September 5, 2016

Who in the Bible are you? In answer to this thought, my study turned to Sarah.

“I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her.” Genesis 17:16

I hate to wait. It doesn’t matter what I am expecting. If it is something bad, I want to get it over with. If it is something good, my natural impulse is to try to help it along so it will be faster. I like to have things happen in my time frame, not God’s.

Some years ago, we made a substantial pledge to our church's building campaign. When we did this, we had investments in the stock market that were growing daily. However, suddenly the market dropped and our investments pretty much disappeared. What would we do? I tried to think of all kinds of ways to either fulfill the pledge or just say that we couldn't meet our commitment.

Then, on a Saturday morning, a friend called to ask if I was listening to the radio. It was just announced that I had won a prize valued at \$25,000. I had forgotten that I even entered the contest, because I thought there was little to no chance of winning. God does work in mysterious ways.

Let us pray: Dear God, help me to believe in your promise that you will always take care of me. Give me patience in times of waiting, be they everyday and small or lifetime large. In your Son's name, Amen.



Tuesday, September 6, 2016

Who in the Bible are you? Looking at another part of the Bible, I look at Eve's profile.

"When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it." Genesis 3:6

Satan came to Eve in the Garden and planted some seeds of discontent. Satan was able to turn Eve's thoughts from all that she had and how contented she was, to thinking only about what she didn't have. Sound familiar? How often I can lose sight of all that I have and concentrate on the one small thing that I don't have and in my mind this can grow into something I really need.

We are much more joyful when we turn our attention to the abundance that we do have, than to the small things that we may desire. Sometimes it seems like true freedom is the ability to do anything that we want, but real freedom is in knowing what not to do. Satan tempts us all still today. We can learn from Eve's mistake.

Let us pray: Dear Lord, lead me to always give you thanks for the abundant gifts you have given me. Help me to resist the temptation to want more than I really need. In your Son's name, Amen.



Wednesday, September 7, 2016

Who in the Bible are you? Now as I am paging through the Old Testament, I notice the story of the Golden Calf. I think about stewardship when I see this passage:

“When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said, ‘Come, make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don’t know what has happened to him.’” Exodus 32:1

I have found that when you are called, it is not always what we have planned or what we may want to do. How much easier it is to worship money or power or possessions, than to follow the living God. When my husband became a pastor and we were called to ministry in Upper Michigan, it was hard to see what God was calling us to. All I could focus on was what I was leaving behind. I was holding on firmly to my possessions. I wasn’t thinking about how God had always cared for us and provided what we needed.

I would have made a great Israelite. I can easily be critical of my circumstances and forget about all that God has provided.

Let us pray: Dear God, you have given me the free will to chase after “golden calves.” When I catch them they are not as shiny as I thought they would be. Let me follow your living word. In your Son’s name, Amen.



Thursday, September 8, 2016

Who in the Bible are you? I can see that I am a lot like many of the people of the Old Testament. What about those in the New Testament? As I turn the pages, I see the story of Thomas, remembered as “Doubting Thomas.”

“Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, ‘We have seen the Lord!’ But he said to them, ‘Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it.’” John 20:24-25

Can doubt serve us? Can we question God and his plans for us?

I went with my husband to visit a man in our congregation who was nearing death. He voiced many of the same questions that I also had. How can we know that Jesus rose from the dead? How can we have strong enough faith to know that we are truly saved? How can we be sure that we will be with God in Heaven?

I would like to be able, like Thomas, to “see” Jesus. I would like to have Jesus talk to me and answer my questions. I would like him to erase all of my doubts. I have to be content with his words: *“Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”*

Doubts raise questions and questions seek answers and answers build faith. There is a line in my study Bible: “Silent doubts rarely find answers.”

Let us pray: Dear Lord, do not protect me from my doubts, but use them to make my faith strong. In your Son’s name, Amen.



Friday, September 9, 2016

Who in the Bible are you? Now I come to the story of Mary and Martha.

“As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made.” Luke 10:38-40

I can totally understand Martha. If I am having guests in my home, I want to make sure that beds are made, furniture is dusted, carpeting is vacuumed and toilets are cleaned. Food will need to be prepared (always by my husband) and then the mess cleaned up afterward. These long lists of preparation can often change my mind about even having guests. Preparations are too exhausting. So I can understand Martha and all of her anxieties.

But I want to be like Mary. I want to sit in the morning and read devotions while sipping a cup of coffee. I want to start my day in prayer and focus on what is important. What kind of hospitality do we give Jesus? Are we so busy planning and running our lives that we neglect to spend precious time at Jesus’ feet. Are we listening? The time for planning and preparations can be later.

Let us pray: Dear God, I pray to be able to be like both Mary and Martha. Both kinds of gifts are important to the furthering of your kingdom. In your Son’s name, Amen.



Saturday, September 10, 2016

Who in the Bible are you? This question was asked in an article in The Lutheran magazine of December 2015. Our mutual ministry team took turns and each of us answered this question. I finally decided I was a lot like Miriam.

“Then Miriam the prophetess, Aaron’s sister, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women followed her, with tambourines and dancing.” Exodus 15:20

I am so fortunate to have had the opportunity to take piano lessons and play flute in the band in Junior High and High School. I love the old hymns and also the contemporary Christian music. I am blessed to be able to share this gift and play flute nearly every Sunday in our services. I am also trying my best to be our interim choir director. Music is truly my calling and I have been fortunate to share this gift with others that have joined me in this passion for music.

Miriam went a little beyond her calling for music and leading and started criticizing Moses and his leadership. She was quickly punished with leprosy. But Moses pleaded on her behalf and God healed her. She learned that it was not “all about her”, and returned to her musical strengths.

Let us pray: Dear Lord, I realize that the Bible is your living word. I can find parts of myself in many of your passages. The Bible is not just about people of ancient times, but really about all of us today. I pray that in your pages I can learn and serve as you intend. In your Son's name, Amen.

