

Devotions – October 9-15, 2016
By Various NGLS Pastors and Lay People

Sunday, October 9, 2016

“Wait Patiently for the Lord” by Ellen Swenson, First Lutheran Church, Gladstone

Text: Psalm 27:14

Wait patiently for the LORD. Be brave and courageous. Yes, wait patiently for the LORD.

Stick-um notes make good reminders, just like the notes on my large calendar. But the most prominent reminder is the cross that I routinely wear nearly every waking hour. It starts my day off in the right direction, and serves to keep me on the right path for the day. And what is that path for me?

I was once asked to write a short paragraph entitled, “The Hope That is Within Me.” Although several years have passed since I wrote it, the words convey my feelings today. There is hope within me that strengthens my dependency of Jesus Christ. I stand firmly in the truth that Jesus paid for my sins, once and for all time. Truly I believe in the presence of the Holy Spirit. Here God pours out His love into our hearts, and we can rejoice in His promise to all believers.

The simplicity of reminding me of the price paid on the cross, and the victory of the resurrection transforms daily mundane chores into making every day so much more special. May whatever we use to remind us to give our lives to the Lord, be meaningful, and may He live in our hearts.

Let us pray: *Gracious God, You are the one who is faithful to us always. May your faithfulness strengthen the hope that is within us. Amen.*



Monday, October 10, 2016

“Getting to Know Jesus as Our Teacher”

by Pastor Matt Lamb, St. James Lutheran Church, Rudyard, MI

Text: Matthew 17:5b

[God said,] “This is my beloved Son – listen to him!”

My best teacher was Mr. Jones, a college professor who taught freshman chemistry – a class that I almost failed. It wasn't his fault. I slept through most classes, which, as it turned out, wasn't a

great strategy for passing the class. But even though he had hundreds of students, he made the effort to call me to his office to discuss my status as a student and future mining engineer.

He had me sit down next to his desk and proceeded to explain that I would most likely fail chemistry unless I changed my ways dramatically. He also asked if I knew how important chemistry was to a mining engineer (it turns out that it's pretty important – who could have guessed?). Then he told me that he would work with me to get my grades up so that I could pass the class. But that was not his main concern. His main concern was that I learn chemistry and he strongly suggested that even if I managed to pass, I should take the course again. He was my best teacher because he cared about me and my future. He was interested in successful students, not just passing grades. He knew more about my world and hopes than I did. Mr. Jones taught me a lot more than chemistry.

As you know, teaching was important to Jesus, too. The word teacher is found about 60 times in the New Testament; 30 of those times in direct reference to Jesus. In all his teaching Jesus closely associated a body of disciples with himself. They were to learn his teaching and pass it on; they shared his work of proclamation, healing, and feeding. The word disciple, meaning learner, pupil, or apprentice (my favorite), is used about 260 times in the Gospels and Acts.

With his teaching, Jesus taught his disciples, corrected the teachings of the religious establishment, and encouraged people to make a decision about following him into the kingdom of God. In his teaching, we find some major themes, including: the imminence of the kingdom of God, the offer of forgiveness to sinners, and the possibility of obedience to the point of suffering and death.

Within Jesus' teachings around these themes can be found his teaching about God's will for us (life in the kingdom of God), his own understanding of his work, and his clear hope that we will be his apprentices.

Jesus' role of teacher was broader than our present day understanding of the term. Besides instructing, he was a teacher who also healed, prophesied, and sent out disciples. He did not create a school of scholars; he created a movement built by disciples (apprentices) skilled in the craft of kingdom living.

As you pray with the image of Jesus in your minds, what do you see? Do you see someone who is brilliant beyond our imagination, knows you inside and out, and is interested in your “success” as his follower? Can you see him listening to you, his student?

Let us pray: *Jesus, my teacher: you are worthy of my study, thought, and following. Teach me your wisdom and guide me into truth. Shape me by your example and teach me the craft of working in your kingdom. Amen*



Tuesday, October 11, 2016

By Priscilla Brunngraeber, Faith Lutheran Church, Rock, MI

Text: Psalm 46:10

He says, “Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.”

Even though I’ve been retired for a number of years, most days seem too busy, too chaotic, too noisy. It’s hard to imagine how I worked full time and still got everything else done! I know many others who feel the same way. How do we get ourselves into such lifestyles?

Perhaps I should move the sign above my bedroom window a little closer to where I spend most of each day. The sign reads, “Take time for the quiet moments, as God whispers and the world is loud.” (unknown) Good advice; now just to remember to heed it.

Even in a busy life there are those quiet moments if we pay attention. We need to listen during those moments, listen to what God would have us do. I enjoy the quiet of going for a walk, and God always walks with me. He whispers to me in a gust of wind, a bird-song, the chatter of a chipmunk. Those sounds of nature around us are constant reminders of He who loves us.

Let us pray: Caring God, thank you for your constant presence in our lives. Remind us to listen for your whispers in those quiet moments. Help us to be still so that we may hear you, even in the noisiest of times. In your name we pray, Amen.



Wednesday, October 12, 2016

“Change of Life” by Rev. Eleanor Russey, Retired Pastor

Text: Luke 23:39-42 (NRSV)

One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, ‘Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!’ But the other rebuked him, saying, ‘Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.’ Then he said, ‘Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.’

I think of how quickly things can change. One minute your children are learning to walk and talk and before you can even catch your breath, they are out of the house and on their own. One minute you have the world on a string, sitting on a rainbow and then next you don’t know how you can make it through yet another death of a loved one. Things that should keep going on and

on, marriages, jobs, happy homes, and health can change in a moment, in a phone call, in an email and be gone.

But through all the changes in life, we hang on to this: at the dying request of a penitent thief hanging on a cross next to Jesus, Jesus offers new life. The thief's life changes forever and he is promised paradise in the presence of his Lord. Whatever has gone on in the thief's life up to that point gives way to mercy and forgiveness and joy through Jesus. And as Saint Paul reminds us we shall all be changed, in a moment in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.

Let us pray: God of the ages, we fear so many of the changes in our life. We fret when we are forced to change against our will and there is much that changes without our consent. And yet we cling to the hope of the thief on the cross that in Jesus our final change from one world to the next will be accomplished in the loving and protective arms of our Savior. Keep us faithful to you and guide us through the changes of life until we find our rest with you. In Christ, Amen



Thursday, October 13, 2016

By Pastor Jim Duehring, Prince of Peace Lutheran, Marquette, MI

Text: John 6:27 (RSV)

Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life.

Robert came into “Bread for the City” food bank in downtown Washington D.C. and I could see he was not in good shape. Robert was a regular. His life was lived from bread to bread, from day to day, from drink to drink. On that particular day he was really out of it. He was stumbling around talking his talk. I would eventually have to escort him out of the food pantry because of his stealing and belligerence.

At times while working at “Bread for the City” on the mean streets of D.C., I felt we were only dealing with the symptom—bandaging a bleeding heart. That bandaging certainly had its merit, but Robert's soul also needed the “bread of life.”

Jesus is the only one who can satisfy our hungry hearts. Take Jesus in today and every day. Let him give you hope and encouragement in areas where you are struggling. Remember when you take Holy Communion Jesus wants to spiritually feed you. He is wonderful bread. He is “Wonder Bread”. And this “bread” helps build strong souls in many ways.

Let us pray: Jesus, thanks for sustaining my soul. Jesus, thanks for inspiring me to help others in need. And Jesus, thanks for your loving presence in the Sacrament of Holy Communion. Amen.



Friday, October 14, 2016

“Answered Prayers” – by Kyle Saari, Trinity Lutheran Church, Ishpeming, MI

Text: I John 5:14

This is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.

“Sometimes I thank God, for unanswered prayers...Just because he may not answer, doesn’t mean he don’t care...”

Those words may be familiar to you from a popular country hit by Garth Brooks. But, some may not know that those lyrics have a foundation within I John 5:14. It is human for us to be persistent in thinking we know what’s best for us. Yet, sometimes our human motives and reasoning are not embedded in God’s will. Rather, our wants and wishes are more of a reflection of our worldly values and with most consideration to the present. Thankfully, as He always does, God is present to save us from ourselves. Certainly I, and likely all of us, can think back to a thing or two that we asked for and now we are quite thankful God didn’t grant it, or take us down that path. That realization alone calls for a moment of thankfulness.

Still, God realizes that through our imperfection and moments of weakness we ask for many things. Some of which are good and in accordance with His will. The rest may be the opposite, and not so much in accordance. I John 5:14 is a snapshot of confidence knowing that our voice, silent or aloud, is heard and considered. Through that belief and confidence we should gain peace of mind, knowing that someone greater than us is in full control – even in our moments when we feel most vulnerable, unconfident, or amid chaos. Therefore, with confidence knowing you are listened to, take a moment to give thanks, as you loosen your grip of control to one who willfully guides us all – even as we sometimes waver through our lack of understanding the present.

Let us pray: *Dear God, we give you thanks for always lending us your listening ear. We apologize for acting and asking for things by our own will, rather than your own. Help align our thoughts, words, and actions with your truth of what is best for us. Strengthen our confidence in knowing that you are in control and we are never alone. Thanks be to you. Amen.*



Saturday, October 15, 2016

**By Pastor David Johnson,
Bethany Lutheran Church, Norway and Calvary Lutheran Church, Quinnesec**

Text: Philippians 4:6-7

⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

What are you thankful for today?

Every good thing you have comes from the God who created and made you. There is a saying out there that is frequently quoted, “God will not give you more than you can handle.” I think that even though this saying is true (this is a saying and not a quote from the Bible), I think it is also very misleading. I believe that God only gives us good gifts and blessings, and so there is no way that God would ever over-burden us or put heavy weights on our backs that would crush us. In fact Jesus encourages us all to come to him and carry His yolk which is easy and His burden is light. So if this is the case, then why does God think certain people can handle so much? I have heard people use this saying and then add, “I really wish God didn’t think so much of me.”

Here’s the truth, people do get more than they can handle. They get burdens that threaten to crush them. Maybe you’re one of those people who are carrying more than you can handle. Even though God would never give us more than we can handle, this world is ready and willing to crush us all in a heartbeat. The demands of this world will crush us and kill us. Thankfully we have a God that was willing to bear the weight of this world and our sin on the cross and free us from those burdens. If you are carrying more than you can handle, bring it to the cross; you don’t have to carry it alone.

Let us Pray: *Thank you, God, for bearing my sin and my burdens on the cross for me. Even though there are times I feel like I carry this weight alone, help me to give my burdens over to you so that I can see the blessings you have given me instead of seeing the burdens that this world has placed on me.*

