

..... **Daily Devotions**

Devotions – April 2-8, 2017
By Members of Trinity Lutheran Church
Ishpeming, MI

Sunday, April 2, 2017

Text: Psalm 46:1

God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble.

In 1998, my wife Trudy was diagnosed with breast cancer. To say the least, it left us quite anxious. What plan of treatment would the doctors have for her? What would be our plan for dealing with this? Our plan was to put this in God's hands just like we had done in our lives up to this point. From 1998 to 2011, treatment involved chemotherapy, a mastectomy, radiation, an innumerable number of doctor visits, and continually inviting God to be with us. On January 19, 2011 Trudy lost her battle with cancer, dying in my arms. For some this would have been a time to be mad at God and to put Him out of their lives. This was not the case with me. As in the poem, "Footprints in the Sand," when there was only one set of footprints, it was God who was carrying me.

Let us pray: *Dear Lord, we are thankful that you so willingly carry us during times of trouble. Amen.*



Monday, April 3, 2017

Text: I Peter 2:24

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.

Today is the day Jesus died.
Today is the day he was crucified.
Nailed up on a tree
for all to see.
Oh, today is the day
of bitter memories
of the pain he felt on that tree.
It pierces my heart,
it tears me apart.
He said, "It is finished,"
but his love never diminished.
He gave his all

so we could stand tall.
His death set us free
from sin and misery;
cleansed our souls of stain,
we will always remain
to love and honor his name.



Tuesday, April 4, 2017

Text: Psalm 22:19

But you, oh Lord, do not be far from me. You are my strength. Come quickly to help me.

Several years ago, during one of the times I was really struggling with depression, my oldest son sent me an email with a video of a song. In his email, he said that he wished he knew what to say or do to help me, but he really didn't. He didn't know "what" to say, but he knew "Who" to point me to. The song was called, "*Arms that Hold the Universe.*"

And the arms that hold the universe
Are holding you tonight
You can rest inside
It's gonna be alright
And the voice that calmed the raging sea
Is calling you His child
So be still and know He's in control
He will never let you go.

I can't tell you how many times I've listened to that song through the years. For the words are so true. The God who formed the universe calls me His child! The problem is, wrapped in this human flesh, full of its imperfections, flaws and sinful tendencies, I tend to let myself worry too much about the things that life throws at me. I tend to forget that as a child of God, I am being held by Him, through it all.

But, I am thankful that His promises are true, regardless of how I feel at any moment. Just because I am wrapped up in my worries and forget to pray, that doesn't mean He isn't there, holding me, through it all.

Let us pray: *Dear Lord, help me to always remember that I am Your child, even in the midst of life's hardships. May your Spirit be with me always, comforting me and teaching me how to turn my worries, fears and discouragement over to you. In Jesus' name, Amen.*



Wednesday, April 5, 2017

Text: Exodus 23:19

Bring the best of the first-fruits of your soil to the house of the Lord your God.

Do you “give to the need” because there’s a crisis at church, or do you “need to give” in thanks for what the Lord has done for you, or do you give to reduce your surplus?

The story is told of a woman who called the Butterball company to inquire whether a turkey that had been in her freezer for 21 years was safe to eat. She was told that if it had been kept frozen it would be safe; however, the taste would have diminished. Her reply was, “That’s what I thought. I’ll just give it to the church.”

This kind of thinking is not in harmony with bringing the first-fruits of your soil to God’s table. Throughout all the centuries of mankind, man has had the inclination that *he* has accomplished all of what he has all on his own. Nothing could be further from the truth. All that mankind has is given to him by our loving God. Our first-fruits to God are simply just that: first we thank God with giving the percentage that we can manage and over time growing the percentage as God provides.

Let us pray: *Lord God, we thank you for all that you provide us. Work in our hearts to be first-fruit givers and help us to remember that you love a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7b).*



Thursday, April 6, 2017

Text: Proverbs 16:3

Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and he will establish your plans.

We’ve all heard of or have been subjected to the popular hypothetical, “If you could go back in time and live anywhere in any time where would you choose?”

How many of us might say, “Take me back to the Holy Land in the time of Jesus”-wouldn’t “being there,” as they say, have relieved us of so much of the doubt and guilt we carry around in this seeing-is-believing age we live in? And add to the fact that we are all just “so busy!” with even the last vestiges of our day being consumed in one way or another by some kind of electronic media.

Having a plan for how we might “fit in” our level of spiritual involvement for each day and week of the year can be a good start. Planning is easy and most of us don’t even know we’re doing it. We do it when we take the car in for service, rationalizing the expense with: “The car will last longer won’t it?” Or when we go to the grocery store: “Where is that list and those darn coupons

I cut? I've gotta save some money today." We wouldn't think of going on vacation without that road atlas (GPS!) and our hotel reservations, would we?

The problem is our spiritual side often takes a back seat to these worldly problems when in reality it should be at the wheel taking us down our life's road. All the more reason we must pay close attention to what is really happening in and around us. If we are ever to give our spiritual life a boost amid so much chaos we must be vigilant and awake.

To help us with this re-prioritization or re-charting of our life's spiritual goals, I suggest there are some mileposts along the way that, if we take the time to look at them in the light of scripture and prayer, we can better see the reminders that we are not alone on our journey. These mileposts are those little "coincidences" of life that occur from time to time. At least that is what we so quickly write them off as. I wonder how many happened in my life that I wrote off as such. Now trying to pay attention, I see better that God's plan has been in the works for a long time. It seems obvious to me when I consider things like the "coincidence" of meeting my life-long best friend in Sunday School almost 60 years ago.

Here's a different spin on it. For some years now, I have enjoyed writing local histories. Recently during research for the latest work, my wife and I visited a cemetery in Wisconsin where a long lost great-great uncle had been buried as one of many who lost their lives in the Influenza Pandemic of 1917-1919. Since he was a Finnish immigrant and his surviving family needed to leave Wisconsin after his death, visitation to his grave has surely been rare. Ironically I had driven by this cemetery countless times for 30 years. So, upon arrival, I impatiently told my wife we could not possibly find the stone - there were too many and not enough time. Shortly later I saw her walking a straight line from the car and soon heard her quick shout, "Here he is!" And as we were leaving the cemetery still astounded, I said, "Too bad we didn't have time to find his friend," and looking left and right on the main road before entering it, the sun flashed off a stone's face with his friend's name on it! Coincidence, you say?

A few years ago, I started to have fun with this notion of coincidences and have been compiling sketchy notes entitled "Believe". By having a place to focus, it causes me to reflect at a deeper level on what otherwise has been another jumble of daily happenings. What a wonderful use for the electronic tool - my computer - which would otherwise in the end just be another distraction. By reflecting on these happenings in the light of the Scriptures and prayer, often light is shed on how God is crafting my life.

Coincidences, signs, call them what you wish. Some of us may think we never experience them, but if you prayerfully take time to consider all of the facets of your busy life, you will see there is a plan at work and there is more to the path you are on than meets the eye.

Let us pray: Lord, cause us to find new ways to take time for reflection each day to count our blessings and through this reflection, strengthen our abilities in understanding Your plan for us. Amen



Friday, April 7, 2017

Text: Colossians 1:13-14

For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

To qualify for a Bridge Card, you have to admit you are poor. To be admitted to a hospital, you have to admit you are sick. To be admitted to a rehab program, you have to admit you have a problem. To be admitted to heaven, you have to admit you are a sinner. Most of us are willing to admit to any of the first three, but the fourth? That one is not so easy.

It is not easy for any of us to admit we are sinners and we live in darkness. For many of us, it is not until our lives become unmanageable that we are able to surrender ourselves to Christ. Our life is a mess and our future is bleak. We have found that we cannot rely on ourselves anymore. We need Someone to rescue us from the darkness in our lives. We need Someone to forgive our sins. We need Someone to love us for who we are and meet us where we are at. That Someone is Jesus.

Paul writes in his letter to the Christians in Colossae, that God has freed us from the power of darkness and has brought all Christians into the Kingdom of His Son. He stated in no uncertain terms that if we are saved it is because God rescued us and not because of anything we did. Thanks to Jesus our sins are forgiven and we are rescued from the darkness in our lives.

Let us pray: *Holy Lord, we thank you for saving us from the darkness of this world and showing us all the love you have for us. Amen*



Saturday, April 8, 2017

Text: Hebrews 5:5-6

In the same way, Christ did not take on himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him, “You are my Son; today I have become your Father.” And he says in another place, “You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.”

Melchizedek is mentioned twice in the Old Testament, the first in Genesis and the second in Psalms.

*“Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, and he blessed Abram, saying,
‘Blessed be Abram by God Most High,
Creator of heaven and earth.
And praise be to God Most High,*

*who delivered your enemies into your hand.’
Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.”
-Genesis 14:18-20*

*“The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind:
‘You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.’”
- Psalm 110:4*

Both in Genesis and in Psalms, the name Melchizedek is composed of two parts: king and righteousness. Back to Hebrews – “Christ did not take on himself the glory of becoming a high priest.” God said to him, “You are my Son...and You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek.” God is saying, You are my Son and You are Priest and a righteous King. Merriam-Webster defines priest as a person who is considered a mediatory agent between humans and God.

Jesus did not ask to be a righteous King or our link to God. He never claimed the glory of being a righteous King or high priest. But that is what God called him to do. Stop and think about your life. What is God calling you to do? Like Jesus, you probably did not ask for what you have in life, the good and the bad. However, God is calling you to a higher purpose. Only you and God know what that is. Be still, pray and listen to Him. Like Jesus, God will reveal what he want you to do.

Let us pray: *Lord God, be with me each and every day, guiding my path and keeping me safe.
Amen.*

