

Devotions – July 30 – August 5, 2017

By The Lutheran Women of Bethany Lutheran Church
Norway, Michigan

Sunday, July 30, 2017

By Diane Gendron

Text: Romans 15:13

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing.

I have this verse on a bookmark that a special friend gave to me. It is a reminder to me that when I trust in God I find joy and peace within myself.

As Christians this isn't always easy for us to do but we need to remember that any hope we have comes from God by the power of the Holy Spirit. Hope cannot be conjured up by human effort; it is God's gift by his spirit.

Let us pray: *I pray that the God who gives hope will continue to bless you with complete happiness and peace because of your continuous faith. And may the power of the Holy Spirit fill us with hope, joy and most of all peace. Amen*



Monday, July 31, 2017

By Vicki Underhill

*This is my Father's world, And to my listening ears
All nature sings, and round me rings, The music of the spheres.
This is my Father's world: I rest me in the thought
Of rocks and trees, of skies and seas; His hand the wonders wrought.*

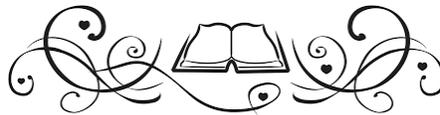
*This is my Father's world, The birds their carols raise,
The morning light, the lily white, Declare their maker's praise.
This is my Father's world, He shines in all that's fair;
In the rustling grass I hear him pass; He speaks to me everywhere.*

*This is my Father's world. O let me ne'er forget
That though the wrong seems oft so strong, God is the ruler yet.
This is my Father's world: why should my heart be sad?
The Lord is King; let the heavens ring! God reigns; let the earth be glad!*

This is one of my favorite hymns to sing especially in the spring and summer. It not only reminds me of the beauty of this world that we live in, but it also reminds me of my experiences at church camp. I went to Camp Lutherlyn in Butler, PA for many years until I graduated from high school. Camp was located about 3 hours from my hometown in Ohio. It was here that I had wonderful experiences and I especially loved the singing and the campfires. This hymn was one that we sang frequently because we were enjoying the wonders of the world that God created. Now I get to enjoy the "Place of Grace" in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Fortune Lake Camp has become a place of peace and comfort to me. I love to sit by the lake and listen to the water and the birds. My other favorite place is at the cross by the benches where you just get a peek of the lake.

I just want everyone to enjoy this beautiful and lush world that our Father created for us either at Fortune Lake Camp or on a walk around your neighborhood---be quiet, listen and reflect on the world God created.

Let us pray: Heavenly Father I thank you every morning and every evening for this beautiful world you have given us. For the sights and sounds that surround me I am grateful. I also thank you for the opportunities offered at church camps. Amen



Tuesday, August 1, 2017

By Lisa Anderson

Text: John 10:27-29

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand.”

There was a time in my life that I feared death. I could not bear to think of someone close to me being gone from my life. I would often wake up crying after a nightmare that included someone I love passing away.

In March of 2002 my cousin, Dawn, was diagnosed with leukemia. She was my “big sister”. She taught me how to curl my hair, she was my go to on fashion, she was a role model, and she was one of my best friends. She was married to a wonderful man, had a two year old daughter, and was expecting a little boy in the fall. There was no way that my God would let her die. The doctors were cautiously optimistic. There was promising research that expecting mothers could be treated with chemotherapy and the drugs would not cross the placenta. Treatments began and the baby was tolerating the treatments. I spoke to Dawn on Easter morning and told her that I had ordered decorations for her hospital room and would visit her soon. That was the last time I spoke to her. A few days later, the chemotherapy caused a septic infection and within 48 hours, she and her unborn child were gone.

But before Dawn left this earth, I spent time at her bedside. I told her stories about when we were growing up and how much I wanted her to be my real sister. I told her about the time that I used her ID to go into a bar and that the bartender really thought I was her. I told her that I wanted our kids to grow up together and that being moms together was one of the greatest joys in my life. When the doctors reported that Dawn would not overcome the infection, my family and Dawn's friends prayed around her bedside. I left the room and it was raining. When my cousin came to the room to tell us she was gone, the sun was shining brightly.

The moment that stands out the most from that day was that I knew that Dawn was safe in God's arms, that I would see her again, and that I should not fear death, as it is a part of life. Williams Penn stated, "*They that love beyond the world cannot be separated by it. Death cannot kill what never dies.*" Dawn is not dead; she lives, because Jesus told us that this is true. I see her in the little things in my life and when I look at her beautiful daughter. I cannot wait to see her again, but I often let her know how things are going in my life. My love for her is never ending, just like Jesus' love is for us.

Let us pray: *Jesus, thank you for your unending love. Although it is painful when our loved ones leave this world, cover us with your peace and let your spirit fill our souls with that love. You are the one who makes everlasting life possible and love lives beyond this world because of you. Amen*



Wednesday, August 2, 2017

By Orice Walters

Text: Philippians 4:13

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Sometime back in the 70's I was asked what my favorite Bible verse was. After pondering the challenges before me, that I felt unqualified for, I finally quoted the above scripture. Actually John 3:16, an awesome verse for all people, was special to me also from my early years in confirmation. It still is, but at that moment I quoted Philippians 4:13. I knew then that only with God's strength would I be able to fulfill what God had called me to, as an elected Board member of what was then the Lutheran Church Women of the Wisconsin Upper Michigan Synod LCA. That challenge has taken me on many joy filled and sometimes difficult, but learning and growing spiritual journeys since. Without the strength of Christ as my guide and hope, I know I couldn't have completed those challenging journeys.

After the death of my husband of 63 years, two years ago, it has been one step at a time and one day at a time. The love of the Lord continues to strengthen me for the calling I continue on as a Christian amid the challenges as a widow. There are some things we can't prepare for, but it sure helps to know that each day God's unforseen blessings are there to lift me up along the way as I continue life's journey.

Let us pray: *Gracious and loving Lord, help us to know that you are with us each step of the journey through life. Give us strength to meet the challenges of each day. Thank you for the love of Jesus, your Son. Amen*



Thursday, August 3, 2017

By Orice Walters

Text: Psalm 100:1:5

“Come into His presence with singing.”

“What a beautiful day that the Lord has made. Rejoice and be glad in it!” is occasionally sung as a part of the liturgy at my church. I can’t help but sing it to myself as I so often drive to Iron Mountain from my home in Norway. Even on a gloomy or cloudy day, it’s a peppy tune and a reminder of how God created this day for me (and for you, too.) How I choose to see it or use it is up to me. I can serve God with each breath or step I take or I can choose to let gloom enter in. Sometimes it’s so easy to fall into the valley of despair, because life does have its problems, but I’d much rather know and feel that it is a beautiful day, no matter the weather or the problem, and God walks beside me and drives with me all the way.

Let us pray: *Good and gracious Lord, remove the gloom we sometimes feel. Lift us up to serve you and see the beauty of each day even when it’s difficult. Let the love of Jesus transform us. Amen*



Friday, August 4, 2017

By Lori Dzik

Text: 1 Peter 2:19 (NKJV)

For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully.

Sometimes I feel all alone in this world, where so much going on around me feels askew and distorted. I can’t help but gasp at the flourishing immorality, the disheartening lack of self-control and taking responsibility for one’s personal choices and subsequent actions.

I often wonder if my views are that of a silent majority or a diminishing minority, because I don’t hear people standing up and making a noise for God. Sometimes, I just want to stand up and SHOUT that what is going on around me is just wrong, but I coward and stay quiet. I feel glorified when an email is forwarded to me about someone willing to stand up and verbalize for what is right knowing they will be slammed on social media.

A few years back, I was bothered by something that had happened within the walls of my church. After intense prayer, I had decided to voice my concern for what I believe God wanted me to take a stand on. I walked away from that situation feeling very saddened and wronged. The pastor who supported my stance, in the end, did not stand with me and those I confronted were not willing to listen.

Just the other day, on the Pinterest app, I came across 1 Peter 2:19 written this way, "For God is pleased with when you do what you know is right and patiently endure unfair treatment." I glared at it with a tear running down my cheek but a smile on my face. I realized after all this time, God was pleased with me back then for standing up for Him and His Honor.

Let us pray: *I am so sorry Lord, for the many times that fear of persecution holds me back from standing up for you! Help plant me more firmly on your holy ground, strengthen me in my convictions for you, and keep me more focused on YOU through all the distortion of this world. Amen.*



Saturday, August 5, 2017

Author Unknown

Subject: Why go to Church?

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT ON A RAINY, STORMY DAY.....

A Church goer wrote a letter to the editor of a newspaper and complained that it made no sense to go to church every Sunday.

He wrote: "I've gone for 30 years now, and in that time I have heard something like 3,000 sermons, but for the life of me, I can't remember a single one of them. So, I think I'm wasting my time, and the preachers and priests are wasting theirs by giving sermons at all".

This started a real controversy in the "Letters to the Editor" column.

Much to the delight of the editor, it went on for weeks until someone wrote this clincher:

"I've been married for 30 years now. In that time my wife has cooked some 32,000 meals. But, for the life of me, I cannot recall the entire menu for a single one of those meals.

But I do know this: They all nourished me and gave me the strength I needed to do my work. If my wife had not given me these meals, I would be physically dead today.

Likewise, if I had not gone to church for nourishment, I would be spiritually dead today!"

Thank God for our physical and our spiritual nourishment!



