

..... **Daily Devotions**

**Devotions – December 24-30, 2017**

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**Sunday, December 24, 2017**

Text: Luke 1: 39-41 (NIV)

**At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.**

It is amazing, the strength and faith both Elizabeth and Mary exhibit at this time. They both are experiencing amazing miracles that even today stir ones' heart when reading the passage. During Advent this same excitement becomes apparent in us when the spirit of the season settles on us. There is an undeniable spirit of good will and acceptance of our fellow men and women. Each year we yearn for this spirit to remain in all of us for the whole year long.

*Let us pray: Heavenly Father help us to remember that you love each one of us deeply. Help us to remember your Son and that you are always with us, in both our good times and our bad times. Strengthen us to hold tightly onto our faith and we will certainly weather any storm with your help and guidance. In Jesus, name, Amen.*



**Monday, December 25, 2017**

Text: Luke 2: 6-12 (NIV)

**While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and Mary gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."**

Alleluia Christ is born!! Jesus has arrived in the humblest of surroundings so that the common people can witness this miracle of the Christ child. The shepherds are at first overcome with fear

at the appearance of the angel, but are quickly comforted by the message of great joy. Let us never forget the tremendous gift we were given in Bethlehem that very first Christmas morning.

Let us pray: *Lord, please be with those all over the world at this special time of the year. Give them the hope of brighter days to follow. Be with our military members, missionaries and aid workers, wherever they may be, to protect and strengthen them in their daily activities. We lift up our requests to you in Jesus' name, Amen.*



**Tuesday, December 26, 2017**

Text: Genesis 1:3-5 (NIV)

**And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.” And there was evening, and there was morning – the first day.**

One of the very special times etched into my memory from when I was very young was always waking up on the first day of summer vacation after the school year. It seemed that when I awoke I could smell all the different smells coming through the open window. I could hear every sound from each of God’s creations. I could feel the cool breeze and warm sunlight coming through the window. It was like a new beginning and I was filled with the joy of life and the wonder of it all! I always was in love with nature and was so very fortunate to grow up in rural western Pennsylvania, so I could explore the woods, streams and fields. Along with my dog “Pixie,” who was a 15-pound terrier, I would spend all day out-of-doors. Back then, your parents didn’t have to worry about not hearing from you all day.

I was inspired by all of God’s creation and how it functioned. Because of this early experience I came to love science and especially the study of animals. Of course, early on, I sometimes was concerned that evolution and creation didn’t seem to mix together very well. This made me question both concepts.

Over many years I came to realize that God is the creator of all things. Additionally, evolution and creation are not separate concepts. It is important to remember that God created the beginning of everything we know in the world. God created the world and people as an expression of his love. God desired to relate to and fellowship with the people he created.

Let us pray: *Thank you, Lord, for the greatness of your creations and for giving us life and the ability to caress all things in the world. Help us to always remember and enjoy all you have made for us. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*



Wednesday, December 27, 2017

Text: Psalm 103:1-5 (NIV)

**Praise the Lord, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits – who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagles.**

It is easy complain about life, but David's list points out the abundant gifts that God has provided us. God never has us out of his sight and cares for us with an unwavering love. Before we even think a thought, God knows what is in our hearts and minds. No matter how low we get or how badly we feel it is always possible to count our blessings.

Being my job is in health care I have had the privilege of working in large University hospitals. Why has that been a privilege? Well, besides the possibility of giving another person comfort and understanding it has allowed me to look around and recognize someone always has a worse path in life than yourself. We can never understand or know the answer to God's plan for each of us but we need to have faith so we can weather any occurrence.

Let us pray: *Dear Lord, give us the strength to face each day with a resolve to move ahead in our life and proceed as you would have us do. Thank you for the abundant blessings you have provided each of us in our lifetime. In Jesus' name, Amen.*



Thursday, December 28, 2017

Text: Proverbs 3:1-4 (NIV)

**My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, for they will prolong your life many years and bring you prosperity. Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man.**

These words and directions are so important in our life and tell so much about our character. If we follow these words, it is not only a benefit for ourselves but leads us to work for respect and justice of others. It is not enough in our lives to merely speak the words or have the thoughts – the way we live our lives will show if we measure up.

Let us pray: *Father, guide us to always respect and help others to the best of our ability. Never let us lose sight of the fact that we are all your children and the earth is full of your creations. Let us not forget you have given the world to us because of your love. In Jesus name, Amen.*



**Friday, December 29, 2017**

Text: 2 Corinthians 9:6-8 (NIV)

**Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.**

My privilege of serving on the Zion Lutheran Church Council and the Synod Council has provided me enlightenment and the opportunity to see the good work of the local church as well as the Synod and national ELCA.

This last fall I had the chance to present the results of stewardship within our church by giving a few “Temple Talks” to churches in our Synod. When I first volunteered I was a bit nervous as I raised my hand; I certainly grew more nervous as the dates grew near and I prepared my text. I was worried how a presentation on stewardship would be received and if I would be met with disinterest by the members.

Well, I was overwhelmed by the warm and kind reception that I received at every church I visited. After services numerous members among the churches thanked me for coming to share my information with them. Several were happy to hear the good work of the church that their shared riches had helped support and create.

Sometimes I believe we forget to share not only our riches but also our talents and gifts with our brothers and sisters.

Let us pray: *Most gracious Lord, please always keep in our hearts and minds the ability to see the needs of all your people. Help us to take action to help our brothers and sisters in any way we can. Give us the faith to realize that supporting your work in no way lessens the gifts you provide us. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*



**Saturday, December 30, 2017**

Text: Philippians 2: 1-4 (NIV)

**If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.**

I believe in this passage Paul is sharing the joy of giving of ourselves to others. I know that anytime I have helped someone with no thought of receiving something in return I have experienced an overwhelming feeling of goodness and satisfaction come over me. I can tell by a person's emotions and expressions when an act of compassion or help is truly appreciated. This is what Paul is trying to teach us so that we may all feel this rush each and every day.

It certainly is a cliché but “treat others as you would treat yourselves” is a definite way to carry out your life and actions to others. I don't believe you can go wrong using these words as a guideline. Once you follow this path the Lord will buttress your ability to carry this out more and more often. After all, this is the way he wants his people to live.

Let us pray: *Lord help us in our faith to believe in the greatness of kindness and compassion to our fellow woman and man. Let us see where needs exist and lead us to address those needs as best we can. Guide us to follow your teachings every day and direct us in this vocation all the days of our life. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

