

..... **Daily Devotions**

Devotions – April 15-21, 2018
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Sunday, April 15, 2018

To Boldly Go....

Scripture Reading: 2 Peter 1:1-10

I am a Star Trek fan...hate to admit it sometimes...but, I had watched all of the Star Trek episodes in every TV series except the last series, Star Trek Enterprise. Years ago when it first came out, I watched a couple of episodes and was unimpressed with the new, young Captain Archer played by Scott Bakula. I quickly decided he didn't know what he was doing, especially, when he told his pilot, "Let's go." What kind of starship captain says, "Let's go?" He should be more like the authoritative Captain Jean-Luc Picard of the Star Trek Next Generation series and say, "Engage!"

Recently, I noticed our Netflix subscription now included Star Trek Enterprise, so I thought I'd try it again to boast (Lord forgive me of such a trivial pursuit) that I've watched every Star Trek out there. At first, I saw the captain as I did before, but by the end of the 2nd season, I realized Captain Archer was evolving, growing and emerging as a very strong, determined Captain. The journey changed him. Well, it is just a show.

Our Christian walk, however, is very real. As we journey through everyday life, Jesus walks with us to help us evolve, to grow, to emerge as strong individuals determined to live our lives for Christ. We do nothing by ourselves, but only through reading the Word of God, relying on the power of the Holy Spirit, living a life of prayer, and faithful service, do we get anywhere or do any good thing.

As we navigate today, let us remember who our pilot is and boldly go AND grow with our Lord wherever we are led. The Lord's path for us always results in a more exciting adventure than we could ever dream up for ourselves. So, I say to you, "Engage, let's go, let's look forward to this day with boldness to see where the Lord will lead us!"

Amen



Monday, April 16, 2018

Being Thankful in Every Situation?

Scripture Reading: Philippians 4:6, 1st Thessalonians 5:18 and Matthew 18:20

Just a couple of weeks ago I was waiting for my husband. He was getting ready to take me to the hospital where I would have major surgery and find out if I have cancer or not for the third time. While I waited, I wondered if I could be thankful in the situation. Oftentimes, it's hard to be thankful in all things. Why would I be thankful that I might have cancer? Why would I be thankful that I have to have major surgery followed with a fair amount of pain? Why would this be God's will for me? Obviously, these are questions that have no answer. So, what do I believe?

I believe God designed us to be well and that illness is not God's will for any of us. Jesus spent a good part of his ministry healing the illnesses of so many. The world we live in, however, is sick and dying because of sin and because we live in the world, we are subject to the laws of the physical world. Thus, we get sick, but I can thank God that he hears our prayers and really desires that we be well.

God's word tells us our prayers are heard and I believe the collective prayers of a body of believers make a difference. So, my thankfulness in this situation is that I'm thankful for God who brought me to a place in my life where I am surrounded by a wonderful and very large body of believers who have lifted me up in prayer over my surgery and results. I have been overwhelmed and comforted by so many people who've offered prayers on my behalf, sent me cards and spoken words of kindness and care.

I believe we can thankfully trust in God's promises that he loves us, that he wants us to be well, that he wants to have a relationship with us, and that his Son died for us in order for all that to happen.

PS: The mass was malignant, stage 1A cancer and with its removal, no further treatment is required.

Amen



Tuesday, April 17, 2018

Privileged

Scripture Reading: Genesis 19:1-26, John 3:16 and 14:26, I John 4:13

Recently, I did a study on Lot's wife. She was a privileged woman; wealthy, well-cared for; she had all she needed. However, one thing we may never have considered about Mrs. Lot is that she was spiritually privileged. On the day of her demise, she was literally taken by the hand by

real honest-to-goodness angels sent from heaven to lead her to safety. It was only Lot's immediate family that received this gift. Even having been so spiritually privileged, she still chose poorly. The cost for her poor choice: she was turned into salt.

We may never think of ourselves as privileged, but we too are privileged in wealth, education, freedom, and health to name a few. Another and more important privilege that we may or may not have considered is that we too, like Lot's wife, are spiritually privileged. We are privileged to be loved by God. PRIVILEGED that we will never perish but have everlasting life. Privileged to have a Savior die in our place!

We are also spiritually privileged in that we have been given the Holy Spirit to guide us in all our ways. Jesus promised the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, to come to live and dwell in us – PRIVILEGED, to have God with us in the form of the Holy Spirit every moment of every day. Privileged to be told not once as Lot's wife, but told over and over again in the Scriptures, that the Holy Spirit is given to us to comfort, lead, guide, give us words to say, give us power, and put fire in our souls to share the good news, privileged.

The Holy Spirit is our angel that takes us by the hand, leads us away from danger, helps us head in the right direction away from sin and destruction. All we need do is listen to that quiet still voice we always hear and accept our privilege of the Holy Spirit every minute of every day. Today, let us remember that our privilege came at a great cost to our Savior, but was given freely out of overwhelming great love and choose wisely. Come Holy Spirit.

Amen.



Wednesday, April 18, 2018

Twenty Seconds of Courage

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 55:8-11

I remembered something I once heard in a movie, that I have since adopted as my own, "It only takes 20 seconds of courage to change your life." I am thoroughly convinced that God is using this little saying over and over again in my life to get me going in the direction He would have me go. My adaptation is: "It only takes 20 seconds of courage to change your life and that of another."

Every now and then, I have to muster up my 20 seconds of courage to act on the Holy Spirit's leading, whether that be saying something to the person sitting next to me, volunteering to do something I think needs doing, asking someone if there is something they'd like me to pray to God for them, etc. I don't know for sure what that 20 seconds of courage means to anyone in the long run, but I do know it makes a difference because I see relief and warmth on the faces of the recipients of my obedience as God gently touches their hearts and mine.

Today, when we feel that little urging nudge from the Holy Spirit to take action, remember, it only takes 20 seconds of courage to begin. We can trust that God has a purpose and plan and is using us to accomplish them. God is counting on us to be the difference for the many souls He will place in our lives. Let's look forward to these opportunities and see them as fun adventures – where will God lead me next? Remember, wherever God leads, Christ has gone before us.

Amen



Thursday, April 19, 2018

Taking Action

Scripture Reading: Romans 12: 1-8

I'm not sure when it happened, but quite a long time ago, I decided that if something was bothering someone (like the dust on the ledge), then that person should go clean it up. It made good sense to me, since you see it, and since it bothers you, you must be the one that is supposed to take care of it.

It wasn't until much more recently, however, that these thoughts moved over into other areas of my life. For instance, we run into folks we hadn't seen in a while and we say as we part, "We should get together, have dinner," (or whatever). Well, we'd walk away and nothing would happen. We wouldn't get together. So, I decided to take action in these situations. Instead of saying, "We should..." I now say, "When can we..." and make an actual date. Just saying the nice words doesn't make it happen. We have to make a plan, take action, then, something actually does happen.

In the past I would think, "You know we need to do something about..." or "I wish someone would..." or "I wish we had a...", etc. Now when I get an idea about something that needs to be done at church, I figure it is bothering me, so I am the one that needs to be taking care of that issue. For instance, I felt we needed some special music at church and since we are a rather small congregation with limited musical resources, I wrote a letter to the church council to see if they would mind if I started inviting some musicians / vocalists / groups in to perform. They were delighted and now we have developed a quarterly "concert" and are packing in the people with others who would not generally be in our midst. It has been a blessing to all of us and a wonderful outreach to the community.

I would venture to say that all of us have our little complaints about what needs to be changed, developed, or implemented in our churches. Instead of complaining, let's take action and be the change, be the developer, be the persons with the specific gifts and burdens on our hearts which God has given specifically to us and do something about them! If it is bothering me, God wants

to use me to do something about it. What has been bothering you lately and how can you take action to make things happen?

Amen



Friday, April 20, 2018

Wake Up!

Scripture Reading: Samuel 3:1-10

Many years ago, I started experiencing a voice calling me to wake up. It was if there was someone right in my ear speaking quite loudly, “Jackie!” “Jackie!” I would wake up and believe I had had a strange dream.

Then one day in church, today’s Scripture passage was read. After that, being awoken in the middle of the night by a voice in my ear took on an entirely new meaning. I have decided the Lord calls me to wake up to pray. Now when this happens to me, I say, “Lord, what do you want of me?” Usually a name comes to my mind and I begin to pray for that person until I fall asleep again.

I’ve grown accustomed to these occurrences and am faithful in responding. Now, in fact, whenever (day or night) someone comes to mind that I haven’t thought of for a long while, I immediately say a prayer for the person, believing that the Holy Spirit has given me the name for God’s purposes.

Next time someone is brought to your mind, or you are awakened in the middle of the night, answer as Samuel did, “Speak, for your servant is listening.” God wants to use us this day, let us open our hearts and minds to the utterings of the Holy Spirit. For it is through this obedience that we will be used and greatly blessed by God.

Amen.



Saturday, April 21, 2018

Heaven’s Throne Room

Scripture Reading: Revelation 21

I read a book a couple years back that changed my philosophy of worship. “90 minutes in Heaven,” by Don Piper. If you haven’t read it, it is an account of a minister who was in a serious car accident and experienced heaven for 90 minutes. The book describes his near-death experience and the time he spent in heaven.

In the book, Mr. Piper gave a description of a room of heavenly beings in which there was a great roar of unintelligible noise. I like to believe that the room he described is the very throne room of heaven. If you can imagine with me, it is the place where all of the prayers we utter on earth, the songs we sing, the praises we speak, the sermons spoken, the Scripture read, the comfort of God we offer to someone, all of those moments of honoring God are heard at the very moment they are being offered AND heaven worships and rejoices with us.

While the loud roar of a million or even a billion or more voices simultaneously and collectively being heard in one moment would be unintelligible to us, God hears each individual voice crystal clear and our worship is complete.

Next time you sing a song to the Lord, offer a prayer, listen to a sermon or Scripture being read, believe and know that it is audibly being heard in the throne room of heaven. The description of Heaven in Revelations is amazing! Know that heaven rejoices with us as we worship and the greatness of our God surpasses all our human understanding.

Amen

