

..... **Daily Devotions**

**October 28 – November 3, 2018**

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*Between Reformation Sunday and All Saints  
Our Historical Past and God's Future Beyond History*

**Sunday, October 28, 2018**

Text: Hebrews 4:12a

**“Indeed, the Word of God is living and active,”**

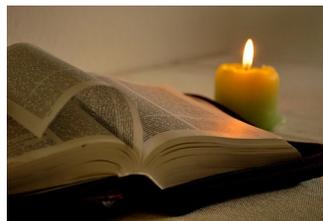
Within a generation of Luther, *Scripture Alone* as the source and norm of our life and faith had morphed from inspired to inerrent and infallible. It is human nature to encapsulate something as wonderful as Evangelical Freedom in Doctinal Cement. It became a not-too-subtle shift to entrap the living Word and encase God in commonly held cultural values.

On the North American landscape it became, “Slavery is not clearly condemned in Scripture so it’s okay.” “Marrying someone of a diffeent race? Abhorrent.” Suicide condemend one to Hell. Divorce condemned one to Hell. Women in politics or professions or speaking in public or voting? Hell for sure! Attracted to a person of the same sex? Hell again. You get the point. 21<sup>st</sup> Century Christianity is emerging in new forms. Some think it is a new reformation. It is freeing but also unnerving.

Is it faithful to use scripture to limit God or encapsulate others?

I wonder, “Where do I use Scripture to judge those with whom I disagree? Where do I use my faith to put others in a convnient box and dismiss them?”

Let us pray: *God help me! A poor and miserable sinner just like everyone else. Help me to let your word of Grace be free to heal the world you love so much. Amen.*



**Monday, October 29, 2018**

Text: Hebrews 4:12b

**“sharper than any two-edged sword,”**

500 years ago Luther led a renewal of faith and fresh emergence. Is it happening again? Emergent Christians are excited about their faith. They gravitate towards churches that hold no denominational sign on the door. They embrace everything from ancient liturgy and mystics to hard rocking Christian music. Phyllis Tickle, author of *The Emergent Church*, is a life long Episcopalian but belongs to a church whose members identify 39 different denominations. They mistrust hierarchy and don't like the entanglements of owning buildings. If their mega-church blows apart because of the sins of a human leader, they see it like a pod breaking open sending seeds in every direction. Yikes! Where is Scripture in this? Where are we? It seems disorienting at the very least. Because of Luther the protestant movement reached out and created many new Christians. Curiously, the Roman Catholic Church also changed and renewed itself and grew. This New Emergence, if we listen, will renew our faith as well.

I wonder, "How will the Holy Spirit help us to grow into this new thing?"

Let us pray: *Lord, you are the potter, I am a block of concrete. Soften me to listen. Help me hear your world crying out to you. Shape me to be your answer, not my own. Amen.*



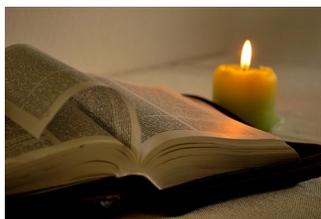
**Tuesday, October 30, 2018**

Text: Luke 24:27

**"Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures."**

Each summer I prepare a "New Visions" class. This past summer we studied "The Great Emergence", "How We Learn", and "Understanding Generation Z" (those under the age of 19). We learned the history of the development of Sunday School in the early 1800's and why it is dying in North America (Sunday School enrollment in the ELCA has declined from 1.2 Million in 1990 to under 180,000 in 2015. This decline is true of all mainline denominations.) I assure you God's word is as active as ever, but culture is changing. Is God's word opening us to something new? Where Scripture is seen as the source and norm for the lives of Christians, it is that very Word embodied (dare we say incarnated) in the lives of everyday people that makes it happen. Five minute family devotions each night before bed (or after dinner) contain a line of scripture, talk, prayer, and the intentional blessing of all in the home with the sign of the cross. Older adults take interest in the lives of children and families not their own. They serve as mentors and become a part of God's "active Word" for the future. I wonder, "Who is right in front of me that I might mentor?"

Let us pray: *Wow! God, you are waiting for me to step up? Lord use me to help your word shape the future. Amen.*



**Wednesday, October 31, 2018**

Text: Romans 14:7-9

**“We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s. For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.”**

“The Dead faith of the Living” is a phrase used by one of our retired seminary professors from Luther. He compares it to the “Living Faith of the Dead”(but that is tomorrow’s reflection). I love history but I can’t live there. The past is my last step. The future is where my other foot is soon to fall. I must live midstride. My last step is set in history and cannot be resteped. It is as permanent as concrete that is set and hard. My future step is still being determined and can be shaped, directed, stretched. Too often we want to carry all of the past with us. That would be a lot of cement to weigh us down! Our faith is informed by the past but it does not reside there. What have our experiences of living faith taught us? What did we learn about trusting and following Jesus that we can carry forward? Our Generation Z youth do not remember WWII, or Korea, or Vietnam, or even 9/11/2001. They were at most one or two when the planes hit the towers. They know life formed by the financial insecurity of a recession. They want security. Security for the majority of them means having money. Their life focus is on success. Success brings money and money brings security. One out of three teens are athiest already. 80% of them have never even been in a church. They have no tools of faith. No prayers, no scripture, they are a blank slate. I wonder, “What words of security can I give them?”

Let us pray: *Lord give me a spiritual rummage sale. Help me cling to your love that saves me. Help me get rid of all the rest. Help me to find new words to pass that wonderful security of saving grace to a new generation. Amen.*



**Thursday, November 1, 2018**

Text: Mark 10:14 b

**“Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.”**

All Saints Day. In Mexico this is the day they pray for children who have died. In my previous call as an Episcopal Priest, the focus was on those saints who are models of faith (and, as I discovered, every denomination has their own unique list of saints). As a Lutheran, I always add, “They were also sinners.” Mother Theresa admitted doubts and it upset the faith of many. As a Lutheran, I thought, “You go girl. Doubt is a part of the faith of any healthy saint. You can still be a hero of the faith whose life inspires me.” The living faith of the dead: those whose lives inspire us somehow don’t seem a part of the past. Their ideas are vibrant, their lives, though

dated on a calendar, aren't over. They live on in the lessons they teach us. Saint Anthony and Saint Benedict inform my prayer and discipline my life. Saint Deitrich Bonhoefer, a uniquely Lutheran saint, inspires my boldness. The living faith of the dead, i.e., those who have gone before. Join me in asking, "Who are the saints that inform, shape and inspire my faith?"

Let us pray: *God, I cannot do this faith thing alone. Thank you for all those who shaped me to follow you. Amen.*



**Friday, November 2, 2018**

Text: Romans 8:38-39

**“For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**

All Souls Day. In Mexico, a day when families go and decorate the graves of all their relatives. As I learned just last week, it is a day when the Monarch butterflies that left Stonington, Michigan just weeks before arrive in south and central Mexico. The living like to think that the clouds of butterflies represent their beloved dead. It is a day for those of us who know our beloved dead were imperfect, dare we say sinners. A day when we imagine them in our midst again. A day when we entrust them again to God. A day to remember and pray for the loud, the funny, the characters, the odd, the shy, i.e., the real. The living faith of the dead part 2. Gen Z, our youngest generation, are living with tremendous stress. They fear that they must succeed or die, they fear failure and imperfection. I wonder, “How can we help the youngest among us to know the joy of forgiveness or the wonder of being a sinner-saint, imperfect yet beloved of God?”

Let us pray: *Lord help me to have the light spirit of a Monarch butterfly. Help me to pass on the joy and color and lightness and wonder of floating on the air of the Holy Spirit. Help me inspire those who come after me. Amen.*



**Saturday, November 3, 2018**

Text: Hebrews 12:1-2

**“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.”**

All saints of our past and all saints of our future are God’s saints. Faded photos of stern old Swedes and squirming laughing children are all the saints of my life. It is Saturday. I had better keep this short. Festive days behind us, the first of the days that in the ancient church began the eight weeks of Advent. (Remember the eight verses of *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel.*) A powerful reminder that the “God with us” is indeed with us as we step into a future where all of God’s saints reside together forever. So as we step , may our future steps be directed. May our future thoughts attend to those who do not even know that they are saints yet.

Let us pray: *Open my eyes. What if saints are as plentiful as Monarch butterflies? Help me spot a saint. Amen.*

