

..... Daily Devotions

November 4-10, 2018

By Fortune Lake Summer Staff and
Various Writers from Across the Synod

Sunday, November 4, 2018

By Grace Tahtinen

Text: Jeremiah 29:12

"Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you."

During staff training at Fortune Lake, three staff members (including myself) were tasked with cleaning the back of the Chapel. Anyone who knows what the back of the Chapel looks like would know that this is no easy job. If you don't know what I am referring to, think of the movie *27 Dresses*. In this movie, Jane's (Katherine Heigl) closet is filled with many bridesmaid's dresses, so many that once the closet is opened it is hard to shut. The back of the Chapel is far bigger than the closet in this romcom, but the principle is the same.

While trying to make sense of an unruly mess, I tackled the table of misfit items. These items ranged from a pair of coke bottle glasses to sponges cut into random shapes. I started finding homes for these items when I came across a watch. At first I thought, "*Who the heck would leave this nice of a watch laying around?*" It had one button, and as I pressed it, it clicked through pages of identifiers of the previous owner. *Time: 3:37 pm. click. Age: 33. click. Height: 5'7". click. 185 lbs. click. Male.* Clicking it again it returned to the time. *Who is 33, a male, and 5'7" that has been in the back of the chapel?* The answer to my question could have been anyone, but we didn't have anyone in mind. Sadly, this last item on the table of misfits could not be returned to its owner.

One of the other counselors jokingly exclaimed, "Maybe it's Jesus!" I laughed and then thought about it. Jesus was around 33 when he died. He was a male, and I can't imagine Jesus being more than 200 lbs. I laughed about his comment, and then realized:

I NEEDED A WATCH!

I had left home without my watch and couldn't stand not knowing what time it was. Before arriving at camp for staff training, I stopped at three different places with no luck. I had almost lost hope on getting a watch until I could make a trip to the store 45 minutes away. Luckily for me, I saved a trip. I slapped it on my wrist and thanked God for answering my prayers.

Looking back, I find it funny how I was so fixated on needing a watch that I didn't realize there was one right in front of me. I had passed by that table a dozen times that week and not noticed it until then. Although I'd like to think that I now am the proud owner of Jesus Christ's personal step counter, it was probably left by someone the previous summer. This moment reminds us that God may not answer all your prayers, but God hears each and every one of them.

Let us pray: *Dear God, we thank you for being with us always and hearing our prayers. Help us to remember that you will never leave us, even when we think you don't hear our prayers. Give us guidance in our everyday lives, and may your presence be felt within us. Amen*



Monday, November 5, 2018

By Nadia Kamadjaja

Text: Colossians 3:12-14 NIV

“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.”

A pastor once said in his sermon, “Being kind and loving to a person who is nice towards you, or that you like, does not count. The true test of love and kindness is when you are faced with someone you dislike, or is unkind towards you. Are you a kind and loving person?”

This summer, God has challenged me to respond kindly even when I was upset or even angry. How can I respond gently even when I am upset by what another had said or done? Even when I feel justified to react? What can I do to love others even when I feel like I simply can't?

An article online said that one of the ways to love others is to love God first. It reminds me of a song we sing at camp, called *We Are a Gentle Loving People*. The lyrics are:

We are gentle loving people, we are singing, singing for our Lord.
We are gentle loving people, we are singing, singing for our Lord.

This summer I feel God reminding me that I am called to be a gentle loving person, and in doing so, I am loving Him. The words of the song go straight into my heart and I feel comforted and at peace with how I choose to respond to others who upset me. The struggle is tiring, uncomfortable, and at times painful, but I am thankful that I am able to struggle. I know that every struggle is a chance to grow, and every difficult person I face is a chance for me to show God's unconditional love.

The world is full of broken and hurting people, you and me included, and we all need to experience God's unconditional love. May you see each difficult person you face as an opportunity for you to extend God's love and to grow in your walk with Christ!

Let us pray: *Dear Jesus, thank you for your unconditional love. Fill my heart with your love so that it may overflow to those around me. Grant me patience and a spirit of humility. Break my*

heart for the things that break your heart, and help me see people in the same way you see them. May I be a vessel of your love, and in times when I may fail, I ask that you cover me in your grace and peace. Amen.



Tuesday, November 6, 2018

By Charlotte Strom

Text: Psalm 105:4

“Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always.”

It’s the fifth week of my first summer on staff, and, despite my best efforts, things are not going the way that I planned. I was assigned to my second cabin of the summer, a group of seven nine-year old girls. I planned my Bible studies, made my door decorations, and picked out nightly devotions for the rest of the week. My campers arrived, and the week was in full swing. However, on Monday afternoon I received upsetting news from home. This added a lot of stress as I struggled to connect with a group of campers that was both a difficult age for me and a hard group to work with.

Throughout the week, I prayed each day asking for God to show up and give me the strength to push through the week. I wanted so desperately to see God and I wanted to create an environment that my campers could see God in as well. So I did my best to make worship, Bible studies, and our conversation to be as meaningful as possible.

On the last night of the week, we have a Thursday worship. The first part of this worship involves the counselors giving words to each of their campers that describes them: a unique gift that they can go out and share with the world. As I sat in a circle surrounded by my campers, I carefully wrote each of their words on the back of their hands. I explained to each of them what the word meant, why I chose it, and what they could do with it.

As we walked towards the pavilion, one of my most rambunctious campers walked beside me and reached up to hold my hand, something that she had not done all week. I didn’t think much of it, but then a small voice came from below that whispered, “I see God in you.”

To hear my camper say that when I had struggled all week immediately melted all of the tension that I was holding between my shoulders because, without even realizing it, I was seeing God in her, too. I had seen God in the small conversations, the silly jokes, the laughter of children, and the world of nature around me, but I was unable to recognize the Light because I had kept the eyes of my heart closed in fear.

All it took was letting go of everything heavy and letting God take care of it for me to realize that God's love was with me the whole time. In times that you feel weary or in times of struggle, look for the face of the Lord, and you will always find the Light.

Let us pray: *Gracious God, please guide us as we do our best to live out your word. In times of trouble, help us to see your face in your creation and feel the power of your love through our neighbors in Christ. In your name we pray, Amen.*



Wednesday, November 7, 2018

By Wade Crevier

Text: Luke 2:41-52

The Boy Jesus at the Temple

⁴¹ Every year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the Festival of the Passover. ⁴² When he was twelve years old, they went up to the festival, according to the custom. ⁴³ After the festival was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. ⁴⁴ Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. ⁴⁵ When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. ⁴⁶ After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷ Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. ⁴⁸ When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you."

⁴⁹ "Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?"^[a] ⁵⁰ But they did not understand what he was saying to them.

⁵¹ Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. ⁵² And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.

Imagine you are a child in a grocery store. You are in the cereal aisle and your mom is ready to head on over to get eggs, but you are fixated on the sugary cereals. She leaves you in the aisle and doesn't realize it. Now when you notice that she is gone, you are in a panic. Not to mention when mom notices you are no longer by her side, she has the same reaction. I've been this lost child in a grocery store before and I'm sure many people can relate to some extent.

Many times in life we worry. It's an everyday thing for me. I am someone who is constantly thinking ahead and trying my best to trouble shoot potential issues I might foresee. I worry a lot, and I'm sure I'm not the only one who experiences this. It is very human to have worry and to

be worried often. However, sometimes worrying can overtake large portions of time, energy, and well-being. That's why I think it's important to remember this story.

In this story Jesus' parents are worried. They have travelled across cities looking for him. They find him in the temple and ask why he put them through the worry. And he responds with an interesting answer. Jesus says, "Do you not know I need to be in my father's house?" My interpretation of this is Jesus saying, "Don't you know I had God with me the entire time? I am safe wherever I go knowing that God is with me"

It's very important to think about what this adolescent Jesus is telling us. When worry creeps into your life, I ask that you remember back to this story, and see that 12-year old Jesus walking right next to you saying "It's okay. God is here. And God will guide you and never leave you."

Let us pray: *Take our worry and help us to trust you, Lord. Amen.*



Thursday, November 8, 2018

By Karen Carter

Text: I John 3:16

"This is how we know what real love is: Jesus gave His life for us."

Inclusive

It feels great to be included. You aren't always. Universities exclude you because you aren't smart enough. Businesses exclude you because you aren't qualified enough, and, sadly, some churches exclude you if you aren't good enough.

But though they may exclude you, Jesus included you. When asked to describe the width of His love, He stretched His arms to the right and to the left and had them nailed in that position, so you would know He died loving you.

But isn't there a limit? Surely there had to be an end to His love. You'd think so, wouldn't you? But David the adulterer never found it. Peter the liar never found it. Paul the murderer never found it. When it came to life, they hit rock bottom. But when it came to God's love, they never did, either.

Let us pray: *Your love has no bounds, Lord. Thank you. Amen.*



Friday, November 9, 2018

By Melzee Jacobson

Text: Acts 14:21-22

After preaching the Good News in Derbe and making many disciples, Paul and Barnabas returned again to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch of Pisidia, where they strengthened the believers. They encouraged them to continue in the faith, reminding them that they must enter into the Kingdom of God through many tribulations.

For nine years my husband and I participated in a prison ministry. It was located at a minimum security facility, so both women and men could enter. We would hold two weekend renewal events over Friday through Sunday a year. Once a month we would worship with the inmates on a Sunday. There was room on the weekend for 100 inmates to attend. Usually we were filled to capacity. We shared stories, we had discussions about the talks that were presented. By the end of the weekend those inmates knew what unconditional love was like; they learned that their lives were valuable. Through that time, the return rate for inmates drastically reduced.

When the opportunity first arrived to work with the group of JOY, my husband was invited by a phone call, and I thought okay, at least they did not ask me. WRONG. There was immediately another phone call and the leader asked if I would join in too. It was a different kind of experience, but God helped me grow through this experience. Father Greg told me one day that I could only love people for who they are at the time I am with them for I know nothing of their past and I will know nothing of their future, so make the time you are with them one that will be a memory for them.

My husband decided later in life to enter seminary and I had to discern if I could be a pastor's wife. After all, my past involved a lot of wrong choices. A couple friends of ours had already started seminary as a second career and his wife asked me what I was willing to give up to follow Jesus. She said I had to give up everything and she was right. I had to give up everything that I had been doing; I had to move away from my children; I had to move away from my friends after 20 years. My path had already been opened for leaving my family as I was the matriarch of my birth family, no grandparents, no parents, no siblings left; only nieces and nephews that had their own lives. When we told our children about the decision, the response was I don't know why not – you already have the children for it. They meant that they could fill the shoes of pastor's kids because they were not perfect, they were normal human beings, too. I came to the acceptance that yes, I could give up what I knew for Jesus and journey into what he had planned for me to do for him.

My life these past 20 years has had its valley and mountain top experiences, but overall my life is a JOY and I look forward each day to what is going to be. My encouragement to you is to live your life for Jesus and experience what JOY he has waiting for you.

Let us pray: *Dear Father, help us to live each day as you would have us to. There is so much more to life when we travel the path that you walk before us. Help us to accept (not understand) all the details and to believe that you will keep us safe through all the valleys and mountain top*

events. *Lord, I give my life to you. Please continue to lead me to that glorious day when I will be called home. Amen.*



Saturday, November 10, 2018

By Virginia Heczko

He Watches Me

Lord, Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

*Why should I feel discouraged, why should the shadows come,
Why should my heart be lonely, and long for heav'n and home,
When Jesus is my portion? My constant Friend is He:
His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me,
His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me.*

This song was written in 1905 by lyricist Civilla D. Martin and composer Charles H. Gabriel as a Gospel hymn. The theme of the song is inspired by the words of David in the Psalms and Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew in the Bible. Civilla Martin, wrote the lyrics after developing a deep friendship for a couple in New York. The woman was bedridden for nearly twenty years and her husband was an incurable cripple who had to propel himself to and from his business in a wheelchair. One day when visiting them, she commented on their bright hopefulness and asked them the secret. Their reply was simple, "His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me."

Let us pray: *Lord, each time that I see a sparrow may I remember that you also watch over me as I walk in this faith journey. May I constantly be reminded that I have nothing to fear as you are with me and that you will protect me. May I see the lesson in each moment of my life that you provide for me to bring glory to you. In the name of Jesus of Nazareth.....Amen.*

