

January 27 – February 2, 2019

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ELCA Lutheran Parish of Dickinson County

Bethany, Norway & Calvary, Quinnesec

Sunday, January 27, 2019

Text: Acts 2:46-47

⁴⁶Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

In the past year and into this year I have been sharing with my Parish the seven faith practices that we can do to live and carry our faith through our everyday lives. These practices are worship, giving, study, encouragement, inviting, serving, and praying. So to kick off this week of devotions, let's talk about the first faith practice, worship within a Christian community.

Worship: true worship cannot be done alone. Sure, we can take time aside to show our love, appreciation, and devotion to God, but we cannot truly worship alone; we were never meant to. Just look at the early church and their experience with faith and what God had done in their lives. They met daily, they ate together, and shared their experience regularly with one another, and even carried each other's burdens together. In worship, we encounter with others God in our midst, hear His promises, experience His grace in the sacraments, and support one another in this life.

Prayer: *Emmanuel, God with us, help me to find the time to and place to truly worship you this week so that I may be refreshed, empowered, renewed, and carried through the week.*



Monday, January 28, 2019

Text: Acts 9:7-8

⁷Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

Imagine that I'm driving home, and I decide to pick up something for my wife. So I go to the floral shop and get a beautiful arrangement of flowers. When I get home, I give them to my wife, and she says, "Oh, these are so beautiful, why did you get me these?" And I respond, "Well, I am your husband after all. Is this not part of my job?"

Now what if I go to the floral shop but instead I buy her the very same kind of flower that I gave her for our first date, and I say that I had gotten it because I wanted to show her how thankful I am for that first date that has led to us sharing our lives together?

Giving, is a lot like that. Giving is about the relationship that we have with God and trusting that God can use what we have to do some amazing things in this world! Giving is about you caring about the things that God cares about and longing to do the very things that God has done in the world because the relationship that you have with God has opened your eyes to seeing the world in a different light.

Prayer: *God my rock and my refuge, I give to you what you have entrusted me with. I trust you to use these gifts to do some good in this world and in the lives of others.*



Tuesday, January 29, 2019

Text: Psalm 119:105

¹⁰⁵ **Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.**

I still have dreams about school. You know, the ones where I am showing up to class on the last day before the semester or marking period is over only to discover that I had not shown up for a class that I was supposed to be going to the entire time? Just at the right time to be told that there is a paper due or that it's time to take a test on something that I know absolutely nothing about! If only I had the chance to study...

However, the faith practice of studying is more than prepping ourselves for the next big test or to make sure that we're never faced with the situation where we may not know the answers because we never went to class. In fact, study is more about listening than anything else. When you study the Bible whether through a commentary, a devotional, or even the book itself, it's a chance for you to listen and hear God speak to you. Studying is really about communication; it's a way for God to speak to you. Crack open your Bible this week and listen to what God might be telling you.

Prayer: *God my comfort, be present as I read Your words and help me to listen to hear Your voice.*



Wednesday, January 30, 2019

Text: Galatians 6:2

² Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

Think about the last time that you were encouraged. Maybe it was a kind word, an applause after a performance, or a thank you for offering your time to help someone else out. How did it feel? Think about the times in which you have offered words of encouragement to someone else. How did the person respond?

Encouragement is a way in which we can help others face and overcome challenges. It's amazing at how far a kind word or action towards another can go. And if you look at the news, the debates on social media, or what seems to be a dwindling spirituality around us it can be very easy to be discouraged. This makes it even more important for us to venture out to not only be the ones who receive encouragement but also give it as well.

Prayer: *God my healer, help me to be able to bring a bit of healing to this world by being an encouraging presence to those around me this week.*



Thursday, January 31, 2019

Text: John 1:44-46

⁴⁴ Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. ⁴⁵ Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”

⁴⁶ “Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?” Nathanael asked. “Come and see,” said Philip.

Do you remember a time when you were invited? What was the invitation to? Was it something that you wanted to go to? Was it something you would rather avoid? Before my youngest was born, I was asked if I wanted to go to the baby shower that was being planned. To be honest, the first thought in my head was definitely not; and as I thought it about it some more, I was certain that the answer was going to be no. However, my wife told me that the reason she asked was that my friends were going to be there, too, and we could go off to another room and play board games while the ladies did the “baby shower” stuff. I went.

Just think about how Philip invited Nathanael. First, he's excited! It wasn't, “Hey bro, there's this weird guy that I ran into, and honestly whatever he says is probably going to tick you off, but maybe you'd like to meet him.” No, it was, “WE HAVE FOUND THE MESSIAH!” And even when Nathanael brushed it off, his brother offered yet another invitation, “Come and see.” The faith practice this week invites you to invite someone into your experience with God. Whether that's inviting someone to go to church with you, to hear your story about what God has done in your life, or to participate in an activity in which you are participating in God's action in the world; invite someone this week to “come and see”.

Prayer: *Mighty God, give me the strength to invite someone else into experiencing who you are.*



Friday, February 1, 2019

Text: 1 Corinthians 12:20, 26-27

²⁰ As it is, there are many parts, but one body. ²⁶ If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

When I was going to Seminary in Minneapolis, Minnesota, I made the occasional trip to IKEA to pick up a desk or a cabinet when I needed one of those items for my office. IKEA is a cheap furniture store that requires you to assemble the pieces together yourself with what I would describe as not the most detailed instructions. I remember looking at the schematics trying to figure out which piece belonged where hoping that I got it right. Long story short, I never got it right.

The point of that story is that every part and every piece had a place; even if I didn't have a clue if I was getting it right or not and even if I didn't really know how it was all supposed to fit together. Every piece had a role. The same goes for you. You have a gift; a role to play. We all are in this together and we each are given gifts to share in order to do the things that God has called you to do. Big or small, you have a place here and a purpose.

Prayer: *Wonderful Counselor, show me what I can do to share your love with others. Help me to see, recognize, and use the gifts you give me.*



Saturday, February 2, 2019

Text: Romans 8:26-27

²⁶ In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. ²⁷ And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

Every relationship is built on communication. This last faith practice is probably one of the most important. It is a way for us to be in constant communication with God no matter where we are. There is no, "Can you hear me now" or "Oh Brother, Where art Thou." God promises to always hear you when you call and listen when you speak. Even Luther says that we can approach God at any time like a child approaches a loving father. And unlike my failings to listen to others when I am focused on a task (yes, I pretend to listen even though I have no idea what is being said if I am busy with another task), God promises to listen so deeply and so intently that even the words you don't even know to speak are heard.

So take 10 minutes and simply pray. Whether you know what to pray or not, God will hear it.

Prayer: *10+ minutes of prayer.*

