

Devotions – June 16-22, 2019

By Virginia Paulson
Immanuel Lutheran Church, Negaunee, MI

Sunday, June 16, 2019

Text: James 1:22

“Don’t fool yourself into thinking you are a listener when you are anything but, letting the Word go in one ear and out the other. Act on what you hear. (The Message)

One day my granddaughter was immersed in play and when her mother asked her something, she did not respond. The request was made several times when finally her mother said, “Can’t you hear or aren’t you listening? If you can’t hear I will have to take you to the doctor.” She thought for a moment and then she said, “That’s it, I can’t hear.”

To hear means to perceive sound, to listen means action. How often do we hear God, but we don’t listen?

We get ourselves so busy with many things that we don’t hear God speaking to us. We live in a world of constant noise and interruptions. We are tempted by other forces out there competing for our attention. God knows when we are ready to hear and to listen, but His call rarely comes with a drum roll. It most often comes in a gentle whisper. We all have a story to tell about God’s love for us. A story of faith and how it has impacted our lives.

The angel Gabriel said, “Master you suffered terribly down there; do they know the sacrifice you made for them?” Jesus said, “Only a handful know.” Gabriel asks, “How will you let others know?” “I’ve asked Peter, James and John to tell others, and they will tell others until the message is spread throughout the world.” Knowing what human nature is like, Gabriel asks, “What is Plan B?” “I have no Plan B,” Jesus says. “I’m counting on them.” Twenty centuries later there still is no Plan B; Jesus is counting on us to listen and to respond.

Let us pray: *God help us to hear and to listen. Remind us that there are those who need to hear your word and that we are a part of your plan. Amen.*



Monday, June 17, 2019

Text: Ephesians 6:1-2a

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother...

Today would be my father's birthday. I was the youngest of six children with an age span of many years. I had the habit of going to the homes of my older siblings because we all lived in close proximity to one another. On one particular day, I was to be home to attend an outing with my parents. My father did not know where I was, because I didn't tell anyone that I was going to my brother Johnny's. When my father found me, I got a spanking (rightfully so). I did not go on the outing and when my parents returned home that evening, I made sure that I was upstairs. My father called me downstairs. He was dressed in a three-piece suit and he told me to look in his inside jacket pocket. There was a Hershey bar. He apologized for the spanking. He forgave me for what I had done. I did nothing in return but reaped the benefits.

I relate this story to the forgiveness that our heavenly Father bestows on us when we go against his wishes. More times than not we neglect to ask for forgiveness. This is the miracle of God's love; though we have ignored him, he makes the first move.

Our forgiveness is not a Hershey bar, but a cross with outstretched arms and a heart full of grace.

Let us pray: *Gracious God, thank you for earthly fathers and a heavenly Father who shows compassion and love for His children. Amen.*



Tuesday, June 18, 2019

Text: I Timothy 4:10

For to this end we toil and struggle, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.

My friend Darley and I were involved in numerous church activities in a short span of time that included writing program material and doing presentations, and we were both still working full-time. When we were nearing the end of these projects, I made a comment to her that soon we would be free as a bird. Darley was awakened in the middle of the night and she got out of bed and wrote this poem:

*Free as a bird, free as a bird, The sweetest words I ever heard!
As I woke in my bed, they rang in my head; I smiled, I gloated, I even purred.
But suddenly a voice I hear; it whispered, and my conscience stirred.
"As you walk on this earth, You must do my work,
And always try to obey my word." And so my friend, you must agree,
That here we're never really free; From all the demands upon our hands:
Our freedom will come in eternity.*

Let us pray: *Thank you, God, for Darley's inspiration that our work here on earth is not done. Amen.*



Wednesday, June 19, 2019

Text: John 20:19b

...Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."

We were not in the Upper Room on the evening of that first day of the week when Jesus offered his peace to the disciples. It doesn't matter because we are all members of the body of Christ and God uses us, common ordinary people to bring the presence of Christ to those in our midst. Peace be with you – receive this sign of God's amazing grace. This is not just a wish of ours telling our friends to have a good day; these are words of power. They are meant to comfort and to heal. It is in sharing this peace during worship that we lift each other up, we give each other the gift of faith. We are the presence of God to those around us, just as they are the presence of God to us.

No matter who the hand belongs to, it has seen good days and bad, it has given high fives and wiped away tears. We remind each other that the risen Christ is with us. Peace be with you. You are a child of God. You have received mercy and forgiveness.

Let us pray: *Lord of life, you have offered us salvation, you offered us mercy, and you offered us peace. Amen.*



Thursday, June 20, 2019

Text: Psalm 119:105

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

During a recent street repair in front of my house, I had to park my car in the alley and enter my house through the back entry. In the evening hours I had to use a flashlight to make sure I would not lose my footing on uneven ground.

This little flashlight did not light up the whole yard, but it lit up one step at a time until I reached my destination. That's how God lights up our path – step by step.

Sometimes we get impatient and we want more than that. Especially when God waits too long to shed his light on situations that we find ourselves in. We would like to have one of those big flood lights that they use for searches. We want to be able to see the big picture, to see what is in store for our life.

But God does not give us that light; He only give us his light step by step for the decisions we face in our daily life. He directs his light on the right path.

Let us pray: *Thanks and praise to God for being our light. Amen.*



Friday, June 21, 2019

Text: 1 John 3:1a

See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are.

When my daughter taught kindergarten, she would remind her students to write their first and last name on the top of the paper. Toward the end of the year she reminded them to put their name on the paper, but by this time she knew the students well enough and told them that their first name would be plenty. One of her students raised his hand and said, “Teacher, will all of our names be plenty?”

No matter how powerful our earthly name is, it does not define us. What defines us is the name given to us by God, the name of beloved child. This is where Jesus’ baptism and our baptism have a connection; we hear who we are and whose we are. Baptism is not a ten-minute ceremony that happens to babies. It takes a lifetime to complete. It is a redirecting of a person’s life.

In Eugene Peterson’s *The Message*, Isaiah 43 tells us, “Don’t be afraid, I’ve redeemed you. I’ve called your name. You’re mine. When you’re in over your head, I’ll be there with you. When you’re in rough waters, you will not go down. When you’re between a rock and a hard place, it won’t be a dead end – Because I am God, your personal God.”

It is a promise from God that we are his beloved child.

Baptism stays with us forever and remembering that we were baptized as children of God and renewed by the assurance of forgiveness, the same God who called us by name in baptism will call us to eternal life - and our first name will be plenty.

Let us pray: *Blessed are we to be called children of God. Amen.*



Saturday, June 22, 2019

Text: Ephesians 4:12b-13a

...for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God...

John Henry Fabre, a naturalist, did an experiment with processionary caterpillars. These caterpillars get their name because they move in a procession. They follow the caterpillar in

front of them no matter where the caterpillar goes. He placed them in a circle and true to their DNA, they followed each other. He put food in the middle of the circle, but they kept following each other and they died from hunger.

This kind of unity is not what Jesus wants for his people and the church. Like the caterpillars, most people no matter what age they are like to hang around with others who are interested in the same type of activities, sporting events or concerts; someone they like to have a pleasant conversation with or someone that will listen to their complaints, because it's more comfortable to be with like-minded people.

But we're not caterpillars and often we find ourselves in the company of those who are not exactly like us.

We stop going around in circles and we take the time to meet the challenge that Christ has set for us. He has set food out there and it is up to us to leave the circle, to promote unity in the church. To be an influence on others we need to walk in the footsteps of humility, gentleness, patience, and tolerance.

We are called to be in union with those who are weak in their faith, to be there to give them strength, but we also need to be among those who are strong in their faith to give us support when we are weak in our faith.

We are a living message for Christ. There is something or someone who needs our attention. Who needs a good deed done today?

Let us pray: *Help us to use the power you have given us to share what we have found in word and deed. Amen*

