

Devotions – June 30 – July 6, 2019

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Sunday, June 30, 2019

Text: Mathew 28:19-20

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Bishop Dale Skogman was asked to preach at a worship service held at the Marquette Branch Prison in 1996. After the worship one of the inmates came up to him and said, “Are you the Skogman from Felch Mountain?” “Wow! Who is this?” Dale wondered. It was a man from his hometown who then said, “Wait here while I go find my nephew.” At that moment Bishop Dale was inspired to seek to provide a Christian opportunity in all fifteen prisons in the Northern Great Lakes Synod. He applied for a grant from the Seibert Foundation to help make that happen. He was successful. We had been praying for a ministry in which we could become involved. Our prayer was answered when he asked us to administer the grant. Working with Prison Chaplains led us to meet Bob Matchett, who was then the Chaplain at Marquette Branch Prison. He invited us to become involved in the Kyrex Prison Ministry. As of May 4, 2019, over 1,200 inmates of MBP have been exposed to the love of Jesus during fifty-one Keryx weekends. Dale’s initiative has led to making disciples of hundreds of inmates.

Let us pray: *Dear Lord, help us to find the “nations” you want us to visit. Amen*



Monday, July 1, 2019

Text: Mathew 25:44

“...Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?”

Keyrx , a Greek word meaning the herald or messenger, is a worldwide ecumenical Christian Prison Ministry. Twenty-five volunteers and 24 prisoners meet together in the prison Chapel on a Thursday evening, all day Friday and Saturday and until Sunday afternoon for an encounter with the love of Jesus as seen through the eyes and actions of his representatives, the volunteers. Thursday evening, after a time of getting to know a bit about each other, some coffee and a cookie or two, we hear the story of the Prodigal Son. It soon becomes the story of the Forgiving Father to all of us in the room. The father who upon seeing his son runs to him with arms

outspreed to embrace him and welcome him home. Many of the men realize this represents God reaching out to them; God seeking to embrace them, forgive them and celebrate their return. We volunteers are reminded once again that we, too, are the prodigal sons for whom God awaits with open arms to restore us to Himself.

Let us pray: *Lord God, thank you for the restorative love of Christ as seen through His life, death and resurrection. Amen*



Tuesday, July 2, 2019

Text: Mathew 11:10b

“See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.”

A bit more about Keryx. Friday is the day we spend creating awareness that we all, prisoners and those of us on the outside, are the beloved children of God. The second day helps the participants to answer the question, “What does God want me to do?” Our answer is that God wants all us to be Christ’s person in the places we live, work, play and worship. Day three addresses the question, “How do I do that?” We answer, “With other Christians through prayer, study of your environments and planning Christian action intended to lead others to come to know the love of Christ.” Lives are changed. The love of Jesus shines through the darkness of the prison walls and reclaims many of his prodigal sons.

Let us pray: *Heavenly Father, thank you for challenging us to be your messengers to those in prison. Amen*



Wednesday, July 3, 2019

Text: Mathew 18:14

“So it is not the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost.”

Does going into the prison do any good? Our answer is a resounding “YES!” Lives are changed. Relationships with God are restored. The love of Jesus for all of God’s children is revealed to them and many are reunited with the God they knew before their incarceration. The lost are found.

Here are two examples of faith restoration. “I was at my lowest. My wife had announced that we were done. I hadn’t eaten for three days, I wanted to die. Then my Bunkie (cell mate) invited me to Keryx. It was my last shot at life. Now I have the love of Christ and of my Christian brothers. I need all of you. I want to hold on to this new life.”

“I was a drug abuse counselor who relapsed and wound up here. I was in a prison in a prison. My life was over. Then Jim’s talk spoke to me. God wants me to go back out there and help others to see that they are loved by our Lord and wants them to come back to Him. I really needed that!”

Let us pray: *Dear Father, thank you for finding these two men. We ask you to find us so that we may be your messengers in our world. Amen*



Thursday, July 4, 2019

Text: Genesis 32:24

“Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until daybreak.”

Another lesson from inside Marquette Branch Prison. An inmate from Sault Ste. Marie who was a U.P. Champion high school wrestler, related his Keryx experience to wrestling with God. He described many occasions in his life when he had struggled with personal issues and other people. Winning was always his goal and led him to prison. During the weekend, he came to understand that it is okay to wrestle with God, but that God always wins. He is aware that he is loved, and that God is in control.

Let us pray: *God, our Heavenly Father, lead us into the “ring” with you and to acknowledge your control of our lives. Amen*



Friday, July 5, 2019

Text: Luke 15:12a

“The younger of them (son) said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.’”

It sounds like the son is saying is, “Dad, you are an old man and are no longer of use to me. You are as good as dead to me. Give me my share of the farm so I can sell it and go have a little fun for all the work I have put in on this place.” You know the rest of the story. Verse 17 says,

“When he came to his senses, he said, “How many of my Father’s hired men have food to spare and here I am starving. I shall go back to my Father and say, ‘Father I have sinned against Heaven and you.’” He does not seem repentant, does he? It appears that he is simply hungry and dirty and this seems like a good idea. And yet his Father forgives him. How far off have we run? What will it take for us to come to the realization that no matter where we are in our faith journey, God is waiting for us to come to Him and give ourselves fully to Him in prayer, Bible study and planned Christian action? How will we respond?

Let us pray: *Our Lord, we praise and thank you for your forgiving love. Help us to truly repent and turn our lives over to you. Amen*



Saturday, July 6, 2019

Text: Luke 15:28a

The older brother became angry and refused to go in.

Put yourself in the place of the older brother. How would you have reacted? You have the farm, but you have been working day after day to keep it profitable. You get tired and dirty, too. You have been the good son who always did what his Father asked him to do. The Father never once threw a party for him! He has never gotten to taste the fatted calf. How would you feel? That is the same concept as the parable of the workers in the field. Some came to work at 6 am, some at 10, some at noon, and some at 4 pm. Yet they all received the same pay. What’s fair about that? Is it fair for God to accept a prison conversion? Or, how about the thief on the cross to whom Jesus said, “Today you will be with me in paradise!” God does not ask when you have repented or turned your life around to Him. He is just glad you did and welcomes you, the older brother and the prisoner to the everlasting feast.

Let us pray: *Lord God, thank you for being the forgiving Father who forgives our sins through our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen*

