

..... **Daily Devotions**
Devotions – December 29, 2019 – January 4, 2020
By Members of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Chassell, Michigan

Thank you to Mollie Trewartha for coordinating and submitting the following devotions:

Sunday, December 29, 2019

The Gift

By: Julie Judson

Text: Ephesians 2:8

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.

I sat there bewildered. Staring. Pondering. Not sure what to do, feel, or think. No bows, no ribbons, no shimmering paper. Where did this gift come from? It was not much to look at, no beauty to attract me. Nothing in its appearance to draw me in, yet there I stood with eyes fixed and my gaze intent; my emotions swelled with overwhelming wonder. I knew deep within my soul this gift was full of majestic splendor, so awesome I could barely contain myself.

Without warning, an acute sense of self flooded over me, so much so it took my breath away. I instinctively wanted to flee; I immediately turned my head in shame, my eyes stinging from tears. My heart was full of pain and confusion. I could not fathom why this gift was intended for me. I was not worthy of receiving something so valuable, something so life-altering.

As my emotions churned, I proceeded cautiously to open the gift. With each tear of the covering, I felt the weight of the world being lifted from me. I never realized I'd been bearing such immense burdens; I had carried them for so long I'd become numb to their existence.

Great joy began to pour into all the spots in my soul where sorrow once resided. I felt liberated, awakened... free! With this new clarity, a sense of purpose arose within me and my life in that instant had changed. I was no longer the same person anymore; new life flowed through my veins. This gift that I now clung to so dearly, full of hope, newness, and joy was the gift of Jesus Christ!

Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

Let us pray: *We praise you, LORD, for the precious gift of Jesus Christ. Born to die. Born to save. Help us to remember this gift; this sacrificial gift, everyday throughout the whole year. It is in His name, the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.*



Monday, December 30, 2019

Human

By: Nikki Lassila

Text: 1 John 3:20

For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.

This single verse lets me know I am forgiven. I am forgiven for things I have done or things I should have done. Maybe it was something I couldn't do or something I simply ignored. I am forgiven for all those things I feel guilty about. The feelings of guilt are a reminder to try to do better next time.

God understands we are human and will continue to make mistakes. He understands and forgives our transgressions. These words make me want to try to be a better version of myself.

Let us pray: *LORD, help me improve. Help me be a better person. Help me think of others before myself. Amen.*



Tuesday, December 31, 2019

What the World Cannot Offer...God Can!

By: Julie Judson

Text: Genesis 1:2

The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.

The earth was formless, empty, dark, and void. When reading the first part of Genesis, I soon came to realize that I, for so many years, felt empty, dark, and void; lost, lonely, and unfulfilled. Sound familiar?

God never intended such disarray. In fact, just the opposite was intended for humankind (Genesis 1 and 2). God created us in His own image: to rule over His creation, to cultivate, to multiply, to be blessed, and to be a blessing.

During times of emotional distress - when life feels out of order - I ask myself these questions: Am I a reflection of my Father, the creator of all things? Am I reigning over, cultivating, and guarding what He has given me? Am I nurturing and growing my life relationships in goodness and purity? And above all, how is my relationship with Him?

When sin entered the world (Genesis 3), chaos followed. With this disorder, an unrelenting need surfaced--a need we undoubtedly try to satisfy. This particular chasm is one that can never be filled with what the world has to offer. The good news is, what the world cannot offer, God can! I, who once was lost, lonely, and unfulfilled, have found peace, love, and contentment in Christ.

Let us pray: *LORD, we praise you for filling in the void. Because of you we find hope! You breathe life into the places of our hearts that are dead or lost. Thank you! Keep reminding us that true fulfillment can only be found in you. We pray and praise your holy name. Amen*



Wednesday, January 1, 2020

Chosen

By: Mollie Trewartha

Text: John 15:16-17

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. This is my command: Love each other.

Some of the best and worst moments of our lives have to do with being chosen. Remember waiting to be picked for a team in P.E? Or waiting to hear back after a job interview? It can be devastating to be overlooked, left out, passed over, to be considered the least valuable person...

But what a different feeling to be among the chosen. It is wonderful when we believe we are important to someone, that we are valued, that we are desirable.

Hear this day and every day, friends, that YOU are chosen! Chosen by the Christ, the Chosen One himself! He knows our every weakness, and yet He chooses us. He knows we are imperfect, and yet He loves us. He wants us on His team – not for what we can or cannot do – but because He wants to show His love through us.

As you go forth today, the first day of the New Year – know that Christ has chosen you. He finds you worthwhile. He values you. He thinks you are important. Rejoice and pass it on.

Let us pray: *LORD, help me to feel your everlasting love and follow you. Let me listen to your call and share your amazing love with others, so they can also feel your joy, love, and peace. Amen.*



Thursday, January 2, 2020

Gaining Wisdom

By: Nikki Lassila

Text: Proverbs 27:17

Just as iron sharpens iron, friends sharpen the minds of each other.

In Proverbs, wisdom is valued over foolishness. One way of gaining wisdom is to converse with intelligent people, with people of other beliefs, or people with different ideas. One can gain a different point of view by listening to others. By gaining a broader perspective, we gain more knowledge. In turn, this knowledge helps us become wiser and make informed decisions.

Let us pray: *LORD, let me seek to listen and understand the views of others. Help me to grow with their knowledge. Amen.*



Friday, January 3, 2020

The Giving of Ourselves

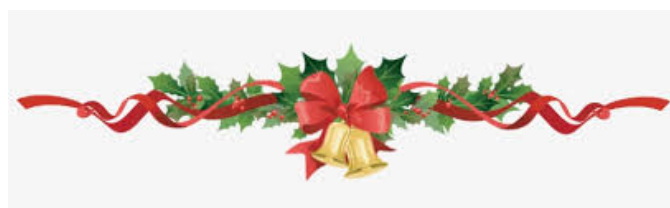
By: Julie Judson

Text: 2 Timothy 2:11-12

...For if we died with Him, we will also live with him; If we endure, we will also reign with Him...

To die with Him means to give our life over to Him. When we die with Him, we are to live our lives reflecting him. This giving of ourselves to the person and work of Jesus Christ, is a life of enduring and beauty. In other words, we will still need to endure the thorns of life, but the beautiful news is, we do NOT have to go it alone! We reign in Him, the one who calms the storms of life's pains, the one who provides the peace amongst the hardships.

Let us pray: *Lord, we praise you for your selflessness. You died so we may live! Thank you for such great love. Help us each day to live the life you called us to. Not a life filled with self, but one that puts others first. Thank you for being our continual strength in all aspects of life; during those times we don't want to, though you are calling us to, and when hardships strike, you are our calm, our peace in the storms of life. We praise your holy name. Amen.*



Saturday, January 4, 2020

Pressure

By: Mollie Trewartha

Text: Deuteronomy 31:6

Be strong! Be courageous! Do not be afraid of them! For the Lord your God will be with you. He will neither fail you nor forsake you.

Do you ever feel like you are being pulled and pushed in too many directions? I feel it all the time as I try to balance home, work, relationships, church, community, social justice, and self-care.

We all have to live with pressure, but people-pressure can be the most difficult to deal with. It is far more difficult than pressure from our circumstances, schedules, or responsibilities. I feel compelled to respond to people-pressure. After all, people are expecting me to **do** something. Do I allow myself to become manipulated by the pressures of other people's expectations and demands? Or am I able, in the midst of pressure, to think clearly and make the right decision(s)?

Where might one turn for help in times of pressure? Sometimes we go through the motions of prayer because we know it is the right thing to do, but we don't really expect God to answer. Sometimes we are so vague in our request(s) that we would not even recognize an answer.

If we want to find victory over the pressures of life, we must come to the same understanding of our life's purpose that Jesus had. We must understand that we are here to glorify God and serve Him. He is our pressure-buster. In Him we can find relief. What the world needs, and what we need to be, are people who do not react to pressure but who respond to God.

Let us pray: LORD, give me strength to make good, faithful decisions when I feel pressure. Help me to be strong and respectful towards those who might pressure me to do something that will only add stress to my life. Help me to respond to pressure with courage and remind me I can always turn to you. Amen.

