

..... Daily Devotions

Devotions – January 19-25, 2020
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Sunday January 19, 2020

Text: I Corinthians 12:12,14-22

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ...

Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot would say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear would say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing where would the sense of smell be? But as it is God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the hand to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable.

When I chose this scripture to be read at my wedding there were some who did not understand. It goes back many years to a lesson I learned at Grandma's house. They lived in a small house in south Missouri that had been built by my great-grandfather. She cooked on a wood stove and the grandkids enjoyed cranking up the water in a bucket from the cistern out the kitchen door. I won't tell any stories about the outhouse. I was in high school before they got running water in the house. One morning as I was helping Grandma milk the goats, I asked her why she had to get up so early and fix breakfast for the family. I was thinking that she had a raw deal. She just looked at me and said, "I never get up to a cold house." It took a while for me to put it all together, but I realized what she was saying. She and Grandpa had a common goal. Their marriage was one body. They supported each other. And they valued each one's contribution.

After some 26 years, I am happy to see that my marriage has that same goal. We work together every day toward the goal of commitment to God and each other.

Prayer thought: *Help me notice those members of the body who have supported me. Help me be humble about my part in the greater body of Christ.*



Monday, January 20, 2020

Text: Hebrews 12:11-13

Now, discipline always seems painful rather than pleasant at the time, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.

In my third year of teaching, I had a class that was fractured. They didn't trust each other at all. There was a group of boys that stole pencils, among other things, just for the fun of it. I told them I refused to allow the class to hurt each other like that. I asked the leader of the gang to talk to me one day during recess. I explained that I needed help and had seen that he was a leader. I gave him a handful of pencils and told him he was my official pencil officer. I asked him to talk to anyone who stole pencils and tell them that we had plenty. He was to give away pencils to anyone who didn't have any. He quickly became my classroom helper and made sure everyone had whatever they needed to work on their school papers. I talked to him at least every other day about his gift of leadership and how important and special that was for the class. The moment that surprised me was the day the recess aide came and told me how he had become the champion of the playground. He and his gang made sure that no one was bullied and kept the games fair and without fights. She was very pleased. And I was not surprised to see his math scores go up either.

Prayer: *Watch over my heart, Great Spirit
If you find it too much like stone
Take a sledgehammer to it
Make sure there are cracks in it before you quit
If you find it has melted into a mud puddle
Strain it to remove the dirt
Mix it with the river of fire that is your love
Then mold my heart into the riverbed*



Tuesday, January 21, 2020

Text: Ezekiel 34:2b-4

Thus says the Lord God: Ah, you shepherds of Israel who are feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fatlings; but you do not feed the sheep. You have not strengthened the weak, you have not healed the sick, you have not bound up the injured, you have not brought back the strayed, you have not sought the lost, but with force and harshness you have ruled them.

The entire chapter 34 of Ezekiel talks about the shepherds of Israel. Once an old minister was listening to a group talking about being sheep. After several minutes, the minister finally burst out, "You aren't supposed to be the sheep, you are supposed to be the shepherds!" When I heard that story I thought long and hard about my own sheepishness. And how my church at that time spent most of their time being sheep. There was a woman about my age that was a church

member but never came. I approached her and we became friends. I found out that she felt shy coming to church alone. So, I went and picked her up every Sunday. We were able to get her children to start coming but she never seemed to be able to come without my ride. Some of the other church members were talking one day and bemoaning the fact that she was so needy. They asked how long I would have to keep up this ride business. I told them that I was prepared to keep it up as long as it took. Someone said, "What if she never comes on her own?" Whatever it takes was my reply. You see, they had not had the long talks with her that I had. She was very damaged and would probably never be brave enough to come alone.

Prayer thought: *Help me understand the need of my friends and neighbors. Help me understand my own desire and ability to commit my energy to others.*



Wednesday, January 22, 2020

Text: Psalm 100

**Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth.
Worship the Lord with gladness;
come into his presence with singing.**

**Know that the Lord is God.
It is he that made us, and we are his;
we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.**

**Enter his gates with thanksgiving,
and his courts with praise.
Give thanks to him, bless his name.**

**For the Lord is good;
his steadfast love endures forever,
and his faithfulness to all generations.**

Wow, this has been my favorite psalm for fifty years. It speaks to me so clearly. I always remind the choirs that I direct about the joyful noise part. I still get big smiles from the choir when I face them to begin our anthem. And the promise that we are HIS people gives me comfort every time I remember those words.

It has been my great privilege to work with children teaching them songs for camp and Sunday School. Now I get to enjoy watching those grown up children teaching this generation to enjoy praising the Lord. Just yesterday a friend was talking about how important it was to praise in our worship. YES, it is very important to start our worship with praise.

It is good to remember that God's love is really simple. He is good and his love endures forever.

My favorite camp song goes like this, "God loves you, and I love you. And that's the way it's gonna be."

Prayer thought: *Read this psalm five times. Think of at least five gifts that God has given you, then thank Him for them.*



Thursday, January 23, 2020

Text: Isaiah 42:18-20

**Listen, you that are deaf;
and you that are blind, look up and see!
Who is blind but my servant,
or deaf like my messenger whom I send?
Who is blind like my dedicated one,
or blind like the servant of the Lord?
He sees many things, but does not observe them;
his ears are open, but he does not hear.**

I bet you have all met someone like Lance. He was the bane of my classroom. Every morning when I said, "Good morning," he would growl, "What's good about it?"

When it became clear I could not reach him, I resorted to prayer. My prayer was mostly, "Please God, help me find a way to get him out of my classroom." It took a while for me to listen for an answer. When I did the message seemed to be, "Just who is the adult in the room, anyway?" When I realized that I would be the one responsible for any action and listened more carefully, God told me that I needed to think of reasons to KEEP him. Reasons to appreciate his presence.

After eating a lot of humble pie, I asked Lance to stay after class. He was of course apprehensive. I told him I wanted to tell him two reasons why I appreciated his contribution to class. The first was that because he was not shy to ask stupid questions. I had noticed that other students would channel the questions they were afraid to ask through him. I told him that was an important part of my being able to teach that class. Second, I told him that I appreciated his determination to keep me honest. No teacher with Lance in the class could hope to be lazy or less than 100% ready. I had never seen Lance with literally jaw-dropping nothing to say. That was the best!

I have to say that Lance turned into my best student. He sought out students that were having trouble and arranged to work with them after school. I often think of Lance and the lesson he taught me to say thanks for the people who give us grief.

Prayer thought: *Look for moments in your life that God seems silent and check to see if you are being blind or deaf.*



Friday, January 24, 2020

Text: Galatians 6: 1,2

My friends, if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should return such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Take care that you yourselves are not tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and in that way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

For such a short simple message it is surprising to feel the weight of heavy baggage as we think about it. One human failing is to be proud of resisting temptation that we are NOT burdened with. We are proud because we never robbed a bank when we were never in a situation that tempted us to rob that bank. We are proud that we stayed married to a spouse who was unfaithful when others took the route of divorce even though we did not know the true extent of someone else's fear and abuse.

When you decide to bear someone else's burden, you don't always know what is in the suitcase. You want to help so you grab up some of the load. There is a beautiful hymn:

*Bear each other's burdens, share each other's suffering,
and love as the Savior has shown.*

*The strength of our caring heals pain souls are bearing
and we are no longer alone.*

*Bear each other's burdens, share each other's suffering,
and love as the Savior has shown.*

*God calls us to healing, divine love revealing,
wherever we meet human need.*

*In times so momentous, expectant, portentous,
the world suffers anguish and greed.*

*God calls us to healing, divine love revealing,
wherever we meet human need.*

My mother talked about the serendipitous quality of helping folk. You and your friend might take a half hour to each wash the dinner dishes alone. Together you can get the same amount done in 15 minutes. Try it sometime.

Prayer thought: *Help me think of ways that I can reach out. Help me also think of ways that I can allow people to help me. Teach me the humility of realizing that others ache to help when I am in need.*



Saturday, January 25, 2020

Text: Micah 6:6-8

**With what shall I come before the Lord,
and bow myself before God on high?
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,
with calves a year old?
Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams,
with ten thousands of rivers of oil?
Shall I give my firstborn for my transgressions,
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?
He has told you, O mortal, what is good;
and what does the Lord require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?**

Some folks have a ticket punch idea of requirements to get to heaven. They think they have to punch their ticket 37 times for prayer and 74 times for reading the scriptures at church. It would be slightly funny if it were not so sad. I feel sorry for people who think God has a list of stuff they have to DO to get to heaven. Not just because that is a petty god to worship but because of where that kind of logic leads you.

If we all have some list of works to perform it is very possible that we would end up competing with others to get our 98th turn at shoveling snow before we die. Like I said it would be funny if I had not seen many times people wanting to keep their "good deed" job forever. Not even wanting to train a replacement for fear they would take over. How sad to think that God would refuse a person who did not quite get their ticket punched enough times.

We need to realize that helping others do a good deed is godly in itself. Supporting and training children is one of the most important godly jobs out there. My wise mother taught me that accepting a gift from a child is even more important than giving that child a gift. I can witness that that first gift of dandelions my children brought me was touched by God.

George Bernard Shaw once said, "I love children and it is not a small thing when they who are so close to God, love me."

Prayer thought: *Help me ponder and be thankful for your grace, God. Ask yourself if there are times that you in your pride pushed ahead of someone to do a job. Make a list of people you can support in their vocation or interest.*

