

Devotions – August 23-29, 2020
By Virginia Paulson, LLM
Community Lutheran Church, Palmer, MI

Sunday, August 23, 2020

Text: Matthew 14:16

But Jesus says to the disciples, “They do not need to go away; you feed them...”

Every time we read scripture our thoughts can focus on a different part of the verses. We most often focus on the miracle of feeding the 5,000 with five loaves of bread and two fish. I kept going over this passage and verse 16 kept popping up. The disciples were wanting Jesus to do something about the crowd and maybe out of exhaustion, because he had been caring for his followers for some time, he said, “You feed them.” This short sentence can easily get skipped over.

Jesus blesses the bread and fish and first gives it to the disciples, and they in turn feed the people. God does the miracle, but he needs our cooperation. Jesus says you feed them. He calls us to action. This is not specifically about bread; it is about compassion for those who are lonely, those who are hungry for food, those who hunger for love. It is about love for neighbor.

Let us pray: *Suffering Servant, open our eyes that we could see the world as you see it. Help us to respond to the hurts around us. Amen.*



Monday, August 24, 2020

Text: Psalm 122:1

I was glad when they said to me, “Let us go to the house of the Lord.”

This verse is often used to call people to worship. It expresses the joy of coming into the Lord’s presence. The gathering of worship for God’s people is one of the most important parts of our journey with God. At this challenging time when many congregations have had to make the choice of how to worship - indoor, outdoor, zoom, live stream, or radio – not a second goes by that God is not with us.

Worship isn’t just about singing hymns, or repeating the Lord’s Prayer, or hearing a good sermon. Worship is a way of life. We can worship even when we are alone. Every activity throughout our day can be an act of worship, beginning with thanking God for a new day. Sing a hymn because you want God to hear it.

Pray for the Church. Thank God for your blessings at the end of the day. Make your house a house for the Lord.

Let us pray: *Holy God, we worship you, we give you praise, we honor your name. Amen.*



Tuesday, August 25, 2020

Text: I Corinthians 8:1

Knowledge puffs you up with pride, but love builds you up.

I enjoy watching all sports and the year 2020 began with no high school playoffs for basketball and the fall season for sports is beginning to look the same. In one of Dr. Gerhard Frost's books he writes about an athlete that was being interviewed at the end of his successful career. He was asked, "What was the biggest thrill of your career?" He answered, "Every time I put on my uniform." The remembrance of one single moment wasn't important, but because he belonged to a team.

I remember my own children when they came home with their uniform and immediately wanted to see what they looked like with it on. I've thought about this: did you know we belong to a team? We belong to a congregation that worships together, prays for one another, we share, laugh and cry together. When we work together, we put on the same uniform. It is not a jersey, but the fabric is love.

For most sports you have to try out for the team, but we wear the uniform because God has chosen us to be on the team. When Jesus came to the end of his career, he did not suggest that his uniform be "retired" to hang in some museum. He told us wear it. "Love one another as I have loved you."

Let us pray: *Loving God, your game plan is based on love and we pray that we can perform in the path you have set for us. Amen.*



Wednesday, August 26, 2020

Text: Psalm 78:2-4

I will utter sayings of old things we have heard that our ancestors have told us: We will not hide them from our children, we will tell to the coming generations the glorious deeds of the Lord and the wonder he has done.

My great-granddaughter, Lucy, is four years old. When she is in our presence, she gets her share of attention. “Grandma Virgie, do you want to come to work with me today?” (Her dad works from home right now.) “Sure,” I said, “where are we going?” “In my room” (Grandpa’s office). She tucks a devotional book, *Grace for Today*, under her arm. Sitting at the office table she proceeds to read to me. I told her, “The stories in that book are about Jesus.” She said, “He didn’t come to work with us today. He went to the cross.”

Some day she will understand that He went to work for us, for our salvation. Jesus says, “My grace is deeper than your sin.” Thanks be to God.

Let us pray: *Heavenly Father, help us to be working in the business of serving you. Amen.*



Thursday, August 27, 2020

Text: Matthew 16:13-20

But who do you say that I am? (vs. 15)

In high school, our English teacher had us write down the names of our classmates and our opinion of them. She rewrote them so that we would not recognize the writing and handed them back to us. It was a mixed bag of comments, but the ones that hurt were the comments we felt didn’t reflect who we really thought we were. This may not be a good exercise for teenagers, but most of us want to know what people think of us, sometimes for curiosity but also for reflection.

Jesus is challenging the disciples and asks, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” We all have to give account for ourselves. So, who do you say Jesus is? Why have you chosen to follow Him? The older we get, what we confess becomes deeper, because we have encountered Christ in our personal experiences. I know that every day with Him is a day of grace. I know that with every trial I face, He says, “I am here for you.” Isn’t it good to know that Jesus values us more than our high school classmates value us?

Let us pray: *Thanks to be God that I can say I am a child of God. Amen.*



Friday, August 28, 2020

Text: 2 Corinthians 12:9

My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.

One of my favorite children's books is *The Velveteen Rabbit*. He feels neglected because the other toys in the toy room are mechanical and they pretend to be real. He wants to know what it is to be real, so he asks the skin horse – whose been in the toy room a long time – “What is real?”

Skin horse says it's not how you are made, it's what happens to you when a child loves you. It takes a long time, by the time you are real your hair has been rubbed off, you're loose in the joints and you're kind of shabby. “Does it hurt?” asks the rabbit. He wanted to be real without uncomfortable things happening to him. “Sometimes,” said the skin horse because he is truthful, “but when you're real you don't mind being hurt.”

And that's what Christians are; we are real and we live in a real world. God loves us through our weakness and that's what makes us real, that's what makes us a person of strong character. A person who can rejoice even in tough times. A person who is in the process of becoming real, accepting God's will for their lives. Being real in all that God intends them to be.

Let us pray: *Heavenly Father, we pray for what is real, when we are in union with Christ, our joy, our peace, our hope and love. Amen.*



Saturday, August 29, 2020

Text: Psalm 57:1

Be merciful to me God, I come to you for protection. Let me hide under the shadow of your wings until the trouble has passed.

In the ancient world, the sea was associated with the god of chaos. They believed that the power of the wind and waves were fighting against everything that was good and orderly, trying to tear it apart. We are in rough waters today. Our world is being knocked around like a small boat in a big storm and it is impossible not to be overtaken by waves of fear. Fear of the pandemic that has engulfed the whole nation. God commands us not to fear, because fear disrupts our faith and creates the biggest obstacle to putting our trust in God.

Let us pray: *Gracious God, you know our every need, you know the fears we encounter. Keep us ever mindful of your presence. Amen.*

