

Devotions – November 15-21, 2020
By Members of the Northern Great Lakes Synod
Synodical Women’s Organization

Sunday, November 15, 2020

By: Melzee Jacobson, SWO President

Text: John 13:34-35

³⁴ *“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”* ³⁵ *By this everyone will know that you are my disciples if you love one another.”*

God gave Moses the Ten Commandments for the people to live by. They can be read literally and can be used to condemn those who do not follow them to the letter or they can be interpreted by imperfect humans as a set of rules they strive to live by. God knows that we are not perfect and that we carry a sinful self within us. God justifies us by his grace and forgives those who ask for forgiveness and strive to change their ways.

Then we are given a new command to “Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples if you love one another.” Following rules is difficult for all of us, at least doing it 100%. We make choices that sometimes leave us on the outside, but God loves us enough that he has given us his grace. Grace through which we are justified.

Loving one another with all our faults and theirs should be easy, yet our inner self-ego tends to hold us back from doing so. Outside influences create biases whether we want to recognize them or not. Some differences can be unreconciled. Therefore, I remember Jesus telling his disciples that if they are unwelcome that they should dust the dirt from their feet and move one. God has given all of us gifts. Those gifts can help to encourage some, but others may have the gifts that are needed in a situation that we do not have. In those cases, it is time to dust off the dirt and move out of the way so God can send those with the gifts needed to help that situation.

The most important command is to love one another unconditionally even if you must remove yourself from a situation. Pray for everyone to feel the love of God. For God has a plan and through our free will we can certainly mess that plan up. Let God be in control and give him the praise for whatever happens. As we find out later, God always wins, and we always grow from what we have discovered in hindsight.

Let us pray: *Dear Father in Heaven, help us to let go and let God. Our decisions do not always show love to one another and we should continually ask for forgiveness for our shortcomings. Please send the spirit into each us to be able to accept this and turn our love towards all in every situation. It is not ours to understand but to go forward in faith trusting in You. Shower us with your grace and help us to move forward showering others with that grace. Amen*



Monday, November 16, 2020

By: Dawn Holmgren SWO Board Member

Thankfulness

Text: Hebrews 12:28

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so, worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.

There are many reasons to be thankful. God answers prayers, God provides for our needs. We are thankful for God's blessings; we can be thankful for God's character and wonderful works and last, we can be thankful for our brothers and sisters in Christ. In a world where there is so much negative, we can be thankful.

Let us pray: *Dear Heavenly Father, during this fall season of colors, cold and snow please keep us mindful of all the glorious things we should be thankful for, all this and so much more. Amen.*



By: Elaine Kuhlmann, SWO Board Member

Anything is Possible

Text: Mark 10:27

Jesus looked at them and said, "For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible,"

How hard is it for us to live in peace with one another? We all have our own ideas about how the world should be, and some topics can be polarizing. Help us to act in loving ways and to work hard to see and respect others' point of view. We all love this world and each other please keep this in mind and work from there.

It is easy to get ahead of ourselves and lose hope; we also know, though, that the Lord is always present, and we truly believe that anything is possible with the Lord.

Let us pray: *Lord, we place the troubles of our world at your feet. We know you will mold them into something breathtaking. Amen*



Tuesday, November 17, 2020

By: Holly Guerin, SWO Vice President

God is Good

Text: John 14:27

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

The world offers you many solutions to your fear. Anxiety medication, relaxation techniques, psychotherapy exercises or even escapism through alcohol or drugs. But here is what God offers you: God. God offers you the peace of love, the steadiness of protection, the rock-solid foundation of God's promise. And God's promise is that if you step into the legend you were created to be, you will succeed. It does not matter what other people say. There is greatness in you. God designed you to reach your full potential, to be powerful beyond measure, to have success and joy and abundance in your life. Do not let fear make you quit. Do not let the terror of what "could" happen affect how you take the next step forward.

As a daughter of Christ, I have been given the incredible gift of God's peace. This means I do not have to let fear trouble my heart, I do not have to let the unknown shake my fight. I leave it in God's hands because God knows exactly what God is doing. Believe me, sister of Christ, you can do everything God designed you to do. God knows exactly what God's doing.

Let us pray: *Lord, keep me aware that this moment is the most precious moment of my life. Help me to use it to decide to reach out in your name. Amen*



Wednesday, November 18, 2020

By: Karen Reitz, SWO Board Member

Text: Mark 8:2

“I have compassion for the crowd, because they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat.”

Compassion is a desire to help someone who is suffering. How do we show compassion today? We can show compassion while driving in our cars or shopping at the grocery store. We can show it through our giving to the local food pantry or homeless shelter. Jesus called his disciples to care for the crowd. How? By gathering what they had, then giving it to Jesus. Then Jesus gave thanks and provided what the people needed, their fill of food for the day. We are called to show compassion to people in our area. I am so grateful for the food that is shared with others today at the food pantries and in homeless shelters.

Let us pray: *Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for providing us with what we need to live today. Thank you for supplying a Savior to save us from our sins. Thank you for your promised eternal life. In Jesus precious and holy name, Amen.*



By: Kris Carlson, SWO Treasurer

Text: Psalm 118:24

This is the day that the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.

This is one of my favorite Bible verses. Every day, through every season of the year, it is a gift to be cherished. When we get 70-degree weather in the first week of November, that is even more special.

Times are challenging right now; we just need to remember that every day is a gift from God, and God is watching over us constantly. Whatever happens in the days ahead, we know that God is with us in all circumstances. My friend’s dad used to say it’s okay as long as you can “sit up and take nourishment”.

God nourishes us every day in body and spirit.

Let us pray: *Lord, thank you for all the blessings you have bestowed on us. No matter what happens in our daily life, help us to appreciate every day in your beautiful creation and know that you are with us always. Amen*



Thursday, November 19, 2020

By: Mary Lou Stefanski, SWO Board Member

Text: Hebrews 13:5-7

Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God *has said,*

*“Never will I leave you.
never will I forsake you.”*

So, we say with confidence,

*“The Lord is my helper I will not be afraid.
What can man do to me?”*

Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.

Many older people are anxious because of staying in their homes for so long. Some are becoming depressed or already are sad. Many are bored. I talked to one lady last week; I told her I do not even feel like sewing anymore. She commented that she's sick of reading. We have a prayer chain for our church members. This gives those who relate the information a chance to catch up with at least one person. I notice that we not only relay the problem needing prayer, but we also ask about one another.

This is the key. We need to communicate and check up on one another. Call someone you never called before. Let someone know you care. Brighten their day. Be godlike to one another. God is always with us. God is in us. We need to walk with our neighbor. As Bishop Finnegan stated in a letter, *“This is our Wilderness time. We are being forged into a new people of faith even as God is close. The Spirit of Christ is with you and will not leave you to walk in the wilderness alone.”*

She has a practical and positive view for the future. She may be stressed at times, but when I've seen her, she has always had a smile. We need to work harder to think positively. Perhaps we need to pick up the old habits of letter writing and sending cards. I know I always feel better when I can help someone even in a small way.

We need to help one another and many of us are, but we also need to take care of ourselves. We need to remember that Jesus is walking with us through this time of wearing masks and social distancing. Jesus wears no mask; he the same now as he was before and will be in the future. He is not distant from us; he is with us.

God be with you.

Let us pray: *Dear Lord, we have confidence that you are working through these hard times we are experiencing. Only you know the outcome. We look back in the Old Testament and read about times people had to endure and then read about the intended godly outcome. We ask that*

you help us not only to help others but ourselves. Help us to stay positive and to look to you always whether it be a positive time or a negative one. Thank you for walking with us. Amen



Friday, November 20, 2020

By: Pam Chouinard, SWO Secretary

Joy, Hope, Love and Christmas...

Text: Luke 1:27- 28

To a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you."

Fearful and troubled Mary found herself in the presence of the angel Gabriel listening to his announcement. She could never have expected to hear the most incredible news-that she would have a child and her son would be the Messiah. Although she could not comprehend how she would conceive the Savior, she responded to God with humble belief and obedience.

Mary was young, poor and female. These qualities made her unsuitable in the eyes of her people to be used mightily of God. But God saw Mary's trust and obedience. He knew she would willingly serve God in one of the most important callings ever given to a human being.

There was no Roman Emperor or Greek philosopher invited to the stable! Instead a group of shepherds, a couple of elderly people, a priest and his wife, a carpenter, and his young fiancée where huddled in the manger with baby Jesus. This infant will change the world through the lives of ordinary people.

With this child we have hope, joy, love and much more. As we think of the holidays approaching keep our hearts and minds open to receive the blessings Jesus has given us. Probably more than ever this year with the continuing uncertainty of COVID-19, our dinner tables may be a little smaller than previously, but we can celebrate with certainty that this too will pass, and we will be together soon.

"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

Luke 2:14

Let us pray: *Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you for all the blessing you have bestowed unto us. Give us peace in these uncertain times we are going through. Guide our churches in the way that best serves our congregations. We ask all this in your holy name. Amen*



Saturday, November 21, 2020

By: Sue Hill, SWO Board Member

Text: John 14:27

Peace I leave you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled. And do not let them be afraid.

This is one verse that I really needed to hear this week. I am concerned about the care that people have for one another (or the lack of it) that appears in our communities. To add to that, we do not “get” to go to church, receive communion or even have coffee with our friends.

As I sat down to write this devotion, I was trying not to be aggravated by the happenings listed above and thought, “What would Jesus tell me about my irritation and distrust I was feeling?” I had forgotten about his promise of peace on his terms and not mine. John answered this question for me, and I am thankful for the peace it brings.

Let us pray: *Dear Lord, thank you for all you keep on helping me with. Please continue to remind me of the peace you have given all of us. Amen*

