



# 2010 Lenten Devotions

Joy Lutheran Church

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Dear Joy family,

Many of our brothers and sisters in Christ have prayerfully and thoughtfully written devotions for our congregation to use as part of our Lenten discipline once again this year. My thanks to those who have used their talent of writing and reflection to enhance our journey to the cross.

Thank you your interest in reading and using these devotions and prayers. The thoughts and prayers in this booklet are perfect for a mealtime devotion, an early morning time with God, or for a relaxing moment before bedtime. I hope that you will create a sacred time each day one way or another to spend time with God.

Lenten blessings,  
***Pastor Lane***

*Joel 2:12-19 Yet even now, says the LORD, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the LORD, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing. Who knows whether he will not turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind him, a grain offering and a drink offering for the LORD, your God? Blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly; gather the people. Sanctify the congregation; assemble the aged; gather the children, even infants at the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her canopy. Between the vestibule and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep. Let them say, "Spare your people, O LORD, and do not make your heritage a mockery, a byword among the nations. Why should it be said among the peoples, 'Where is their God?'" Then the LORD became jealous for his land, and had pity on his people. In response to his people the LORD said: I am sending you grain, wine, and oil, and you will be satisfied; and I will no more make you a mockery among the nations.*

Not much is known about this author, Joel, but he served as a prophet to the Israelites. This book was written during a locust plague, a time of great distress for the people. Scholars believe that in the devastation of the locusts, Joel sees an indication of the coming day of the LORD. Therefore, the people must repent of their sins with mourning and fasting. With repentant hearts – (“return to the LORD your God”) - there is a promise for relief and God’s blessing for Israel. Here Joel tells the people they must pull out all the stops. Everyone – elders, babies, brides and bridegrooms – all the people must repent, and now! For the LORD may come and when He does, He will find favor upon those who repent and honor Him; he will take pity on their circumstances. And other nations will see that the one true God cares for His people.

*Gracious and merciful God, let my Lenten journey be a time for reflection in my own life, and in my personal relationship with you. I confess my weaknesses openly to you. I am sorry for the things I fail to do in thought, word and deed to bring glory to you. Help me to make fresh and renewed commitments to live according to your will for me. In doing these things, I will see your glory. Amen.*

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February 18, 2010

Leslie and Jamie Montagne

*Exodus 3:1-6 Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. Then Moses said, "I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up." When the LORD saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." Then he said, "Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." He said further, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.*

This story is an unequivocal “**God sighting**”! Angels in flames, and a burning bush from which God speaks! In one of the most famous biblical passages telling of God’s appearance to man, He fully reveals Himself, and commands Moses to honor His holy ground. No man can look upon God, and it is so with Moses. Yet when God calls, Moses does not run. Instead he replies, “Here I am!”

Why would God choose to reveal himself at this time, at this place, to Moses? Perhaps Moses had an open, but wounded heart. Possibly he was seeking answers about his life, especially given the historical perspective of his time previously in Egypt. Moses fled Egypt, after killing an Egyptian supervisor questioning who was brutally beating Hebrew slaves. The Pharaoh, who raised Moses in his palace, is greatly angered and seeks to kill him. Moses runs away to the peaceful land of Mid’ian, where he is taken in by a priest, Jethro, and his family of sheep herders. Moses, probably feeling lost and alone, his purpose in life, has wandered into the wilderness with the sheep. He’s close to the mountain (Horeb) where it was believed God resided. And God comes to reclaim Moses, in a big way.

God had a plan for Moses; he went on to great things, through steadfast faith and obedience to God. God used Moses’ open heart and faith in a powerful way. Although the work God calls him to do (later we find him rising up against Pharaoh to free the Hebrews) was not easy, he listened to God, just as he did on Mt. Horeb that day. And God was steadfast to Moses throughout his life.

*Prayer: God, you have a plan for me. Help me to open my heart, to invite you in to speak to me, as you did with Moses. Let me be fervent in my prayers and steadfast in my faith, even in trying times ahead. I praise you, LORD, the Holy One in my life. Lead me on to do your work in the days to come. Amen*

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February 19, 2010

Becky Fleck

***John 17:15-19 I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.***

World values and Christian values differ!

A follower of Christ is made pure and holy through believing and obeying God's Word. We have accepted God's forgiveness through Christ's death, and therefore the daily application of God's word has a purifying effect on our minds and hearts. Scripture tells us that sin motivates us to confess, renews our relationship with Christ and guides us on the right path. Jesus asked God to use believers in the world, not separate them from the world. Therefore, we should not try to escape and avoid relationships with non-believers. But we are to do the work that God sent us to do — to be salt and the light. Meaning, we should affect others positively (as salt seasons food) and to be a beacon of truth to all in every way (as the light of a beacon's usefulness can be seen near or far.)

***Dear Father, I ask Jesus to pray to you on our behalf, as he did for his disciples. To give us courage to be salt and light to all we meet and to use us to spread your work as we follow in his leadership. Amen.***

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February 20, 2010

Rhonda Kennedy

***James 1:19-21 You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; for your anger does not produce God's righteousness. Therefore rid yourselves of all sordidness and rank growth of wickedness, and welcome with meekness the implanted word that has the power to save your souls.***

I can't count the numbers of times I have told my own children and the children I work with that "God gave us two ears and one mouth" so you should listen twice as much as you speak. Many times I find myself needing to take my own advice and that of James. How many times do we pretend that we are listening to what others are saying, but we are really thinking about our responses, planning our grocery lists, or even being judgmental about the person to whom we should be listening.

Now, let's take it a step further and think about how many times we need to be "quick to listen, slow to speak" when we are waiting for an answer from God. Are we so busy asking and telling God that we aren't hearing what He is telling us?

***Heavenly Father, our prayer today is that we will take more time to listen to you instead of continually speaking. Father, help us to truly accept the word that you have given us. Thank you for the many blessings you have given us. In your holy name we pray. Amen***

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February 21, 2010

Holly Paul Edwards

***II Timothy 2:1-2 You then, my child, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus; and what you have heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will be able to teach others as well.***

QUICK! Picture in your mind the strongest person you can think of. Is it the legendary Atlas, kneeling under the weight of holding the world on his shoulders? Would it be the various contestants for Mr. or Ms. Universe, flexing their exaggerated, overdeveloped muscles? How about a champion Sumo wrestler or a Scotsman hurling the telephone-pole-sized caber high into the air? Strength is defined as "the ability to apply muscular force."

In these verses from his last words to his devoted young friend Timothy, Paul—writing from a Roman prison while awaiting execution—counsels his protégé to "be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." Paul goes on to exhort Timothy to share his teachings to those who are qualified to spread them to others. How can we be strong physically in grace, which is the spiritual

state of undeserved love and mercy from God? If we trust completely in God, we will be given the fortitude to withstand all manner of conditions.

These words helped give Timothy the courage to continue declaring the message of Christ despite any hardships he might—or almost certainly would—encounter. It was important for Timothy to preach the gospel so that the Christian faith could spread throughout the world. Is this any less a mission for us today? God will give us the STRENGTH and GRACE to tell the Good News!

***Loving Father, You are the source of all things. Please continue to bless your servants with your grace, and grant us the strength to, as the old familiar hymn proclaims, “Publish glad tidings, tidings of peace, tidings of Jesus, redemption, and release.” Amen.***

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February 22, 2010

JoAnn Dixon

***Acts 2:37-39 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, “Brothers, what should we do?” Peter said to them, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.”***

In reading these verses, it occurred to me that this was one of the “aha” moments Pastor Lane talks about frequently. We’ve all had them and I think this was an eye opening moment for those first converts.

Do you know people who must have everything either written in black or white, or those whom everything has to be proven to them before they believe you? Yes, we all know someone like that. I think maybe the Israelites were like that, too. Once they were witness to the resurrection of Jesus, they were finally able to believe and have faith. Surely, it had to be like a rebirth of their souls.

I feel that the Israelites were basically good people (maybe very deep down for some) because they wanted to rectify their mistake and had the courage to ask Peter and the other apostles what they needed to do to fix things. Peter told them they needed to repent, be baptized, and receive not only forgiveness, but the Holy Spirit. Wow! Peter provided the people with the guidance they were searching for, and those who did what had to be done received the greatest gift of the Holy Spirit, of faith, of understanding, and love for the Lord. They knew in their hearts what it felt like to be whole.

Personally, I feel like I have a rebirth of my heart and soul every Sunday when I come to church. Each time I walk into the sanctuary, I feel God’s love and I am so happy to be a child of God. We all have something in common with those first converts in that our faith and love for and from God is renewed with every prayer. Please continue to thank Him and to pass the word....we are disciples and should share our gifts of grace.  
God’s Peace

***Dear Lord: Thank you for sending the guidance of Peter and the apostles to those first converts. May we always have the courage of those before us who believed and began their faith in you. May we take a moment to thank your for our may blessings and your grace every day. We thank you most for giving us your love. Amen.***

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February 23, 2010

Gretchen Breidert

***Rom 8:31-32 What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else?***

We have all known tough times and heartache. Oh, there are those who appear to go through life unscathed...or perhaps they have been blessed with more profound understanding of who God is and how much they are loved by Him.

Romans 8 has been my personal refuge. The words have carried me through irrevocable loss, alienation and betrayal. I have clung to “if God is for us, who can be against us”. No matter how dire the circumstances, he’s got my back. In my

brokenness I am assured that I am loved and that nothing can change that.

The next time you feel as if your whole world is crashing, please read Romans 8:31-39. Let the words bless you, lift you up and make you whole.

***Dear Lord God, Thank you for showing us the depth of your love in the gift of Jesus. Continue to help us in our struggles. Lift us up so that we may better serve you and mankind. Remind us that you are always there for us and that nothing can separate us from your love. Amen.***

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February 24, 2010

Danny Crout

***Mark 6:7-13 He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics. He said to them, "Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them." So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent. They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.***

In our journey through life, we need support and verification from another that we are focused and doing God's work. Jesus sent his disciples in sets of two for the same reason. Jesus empowered his disciples to heal and cast out demons while spreading the word. To make matters tougher, he asked them to take no food or money but to live on the kindness of the communities they visited. Can you be faithful in your Christian duties while being completely helpless as were the disciples? Jesus tells us to put our mind, bodies and mouth in position. He will do the rest. You have to look no farther than the SPIHN group who visit our church to walk the journey to which Jesus sent us. Focus on providing for others and let God focus on providing for you.

***Help us, dear God, to be a blessing to others as you have bless us. Using our Christian education and the support of our fellow Christians, help us to talk the talk and walk the walk without the worry about our provisions. We know you will sustain us. Our faith says it is so. Amen.***

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February 25, 2010

Roger Meadows

***Matthew 24:36-37 "But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.***

Several years ago, our granddaughter, then five years old, was visiting with us. Late in the day, she climbed on my lap, and asked me a question, "Grandpa, when I grow up, will you be dead?" I didn't know where the thought came from, but I said, "No matter who we are, we never know when our time will come, but I hope I will live long enough to see you grow into a young woman." She thought a moment, then said, "Yes, but you'll be rilly, rilly old?"

We all know that we cannot predict the future, but if we are wise, we try to prepare for it. We write wills and powers of attorney; we buy life insurance; and some even buy cemetery plots and prepay funeral expenses. But do we think about Jesus' words in the verses above? In the late chapters of St. Matthew, Jesus begins to foreshadow His departure from Earth, with parables and prophesies about His return. There are the stories of the five foolish virgins with no lamp oil locked out of the wedding; the unfaithful servant who is surprised by his master's return; and the people in the days of Noah who carried on with their normal activities before the impending flood. There is also the Parable of the Talents.

Do we bury our talents or put them to good use to the glory of God? Do we "oil our lamps" by studying God's word and applying it to our lives? Our Master has placed us in charge of his household. Will He be pleased with our stewardship when He returns?

I hope that I, though a weak human being, am prepared for His return. And Olivia? I hope I will dance at your wedding.

***Dear Lord, help me remember always the gift of salvation through your Son Jesus Christ, which I know I did nothing to earn. Help me respond by living my life to the best of my ability, in such a way that He will not find me unaware and unprepared. Amen***

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February 26, 2010

Beth Thomas

***Ephesians 6:10-13 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.***

As I read this passage from the Bible, I see myself nodding reminding myself that this is something I have to remind myself to do everyday-rely in his mighty strength. Being an educator, I have witnessed many horrific crimes against children and have had to stand up for them when others could or would not, but it is not just on rare days that I have to stand firm. Middle school is a very hard time for these young teens who see and deal with temptation every day. Evil swirls around them sometimes like a hurricane waiting for its invitation. As a mom and a teacher, every day I have to wear my armor of the Lord and be a role model and let them know I care. I also have to remember that when I feel like I am not making a difference in this fight, I know I have to be strong in the Lord and just believe.

***Dear Lord, Give us the strength to stand against evil and be role models for all the world's children. Use us and guide us to be your army. Amen***

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February 27, 2010

Margaret Kluttz

***Leviticus 25:1-7 The LORD spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, saying: Speak to the people of Israel and say to them: When you enter the land that I am giving you, the land shall observe a Sabbath for the LORD. Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather in their yield; but in the seventh year there shall be a Sabbath of complete rest for the land, a Sabbath for the LORD: you shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard. You shall not reap the aftergrowth of your harvest or gather the grapes of your unpruned vine: it shall be a year of complete rest for the land. You may eat what the land yields during its Sabbath--you, your male and female slaves, your hired and your bound laborers who live with you; for your livestock also, and for the wild animals in your land all its yield shall be for food.***

Doesn't this passage compare to the seven-day week of resting on the seventh day? I grew up on a very small farm in rural North Carolina, and my daddy would allow fields to be fallow for a year to restore the nutrients to the soil. Our bodies need the same treatment. We all work hard at jobs all week, and we need time for restoration of our bodies and minds. I compared this passage with my retirement, which is wonderful by the way. I loved my job of helping children learn new things and giving them the opportunities to be the most they could be. Teaching young people has been the highlight of my life along with my husband and me raising our own children. There is nothing greater in the world than having a former student tell me that I helped them so much to prepare for life. On the other hand, my retirement doesn't just allow me to rest completely. There are so many ways that I can still be productive in the community helping other people and the church. It is my responsibility to God to help others.

***Dear Heavenly Father, help us to always be mindful of the responsibilities of taking care of our laboring bodies so that we will best be able to serve You. Show us how to take our harvest to the mission field and serve others with You in our hearts. Amen***

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February 28, 2010

Elane Poeta

***Psalm 5 Give ear to my words, O LORD; give heed to my sighing. Listen to the sound of my cry, my King and my God, for to you I pray. O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice; in the morning I plead my case to you, and watch. For you are not a God who delights in wickedness; evil will not sojourn with you. The boastful will not stand before your eyes; you hate all evildoers. You destroy those who speak lies; the LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful. But I, through the abundance of your steadfast love, will enter your house, I will bow down toward your holy temple in awe of you. Lead me, O LORD, in your righteousness because of my enemies; make your way straight before me. For there is no truth in their mouths; their hearts are destruction; their throats are open graves; they flatter with their tongues. Make them bear their guilt, O God; let them fall by their own counsels; because of their many transgressions cast them out, for they have rebelled against you. But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them ever sing for joy. Spread your protection over them, so that those who love your name may exult in you. For you bless the righteous, O LORD; you cover them with favor as with a shield.***

“Trust in God for Deliverance from Enemies” is written above Psalm 5 in my Bible. Many enemies are present in life, however Psalm 5 reawakened the presence of enemies that our family faced during the last seven years. Spring 2003 arrived, and it had been many weeks, since we had received communication from our soldier son. A Joy family member suggested a contact number, and I strongly suggested that my “retired military” husband make the contact. We were told that Josh was in the Iraqi theater. Spring 2006 sent Josh back to that same “theater,” for 2+ years. “Trust in God for Deliverance from Enemies” was the faith that carried our family through this ordeal. The enemies were very real, however our faith, and the many “God Sightings” received through our Joy family served as protection for our family. A Joy family member referred us to Psalm 91, “Assurance of God’s Protection.” This Psalm had been read while her husband served in Viet Nam.

***Dear Father in Heaven: Thank you for the protection you spread over us. Help us to “see You,” through the acts of other disciples, who are a part of our lives. Help us to be disciples to others, so that they can “see You,” through our acts. Amen.***

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March 1, 2010

Clark Davison

***James 1:22-24 But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like.***

Do what the word says? Wow!! The Word says many, many things and I don’t know how to do them all. Feed my sheep, have no other gods, love one another, whatever you have learned or received or heard from me...put into practice, etc? Besides, I am “retired” and it would be easier to just relax, read, play, travel and do all the things I have been putting off. What if I tried to do something the word said and no one appreciated it, or no one seemed to notice? I don’t think God has time for doubts--He expects action.

Well, as the passage says: “Do”. Here is a recent example for me. While examining my gifts before I retired, I felt the Lord was calling me to work with Financial Training as a way to “feed” people’s emotional and physical well-being. So we (Jan does the snacks, I study the material and facilitate discussion) have been facilitating Dave Ramsey Financial Peace University sessions, expecting that nearly everyone would want to learn how to better manage their finances. We expect 10-20 couples to show up, but were rewarded with 4 couples for our last session. Deciding to “do” the session with only these 4 couples turned out to be an extremely rewarding effort.

I am convinced that we need to “do”, and not just “do” to get by, but “do” as well as we can. Then we let God, through the Holy Spirit, help us with the results. Maybe, God’s plan was to work with just 4 couples instead of 20. We continue to schedule more sessions, and are anxious to see how God uses our “doing”.

***Gracious God, give us the courage, strength and drive to “do” what you are calling us to do. Through your Holy Spirit, bless our actions to show your glory among your people. This we ask through your Son Jesus. Amen.***

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March 2, 2010

Jan Davison

***II Corinthians 4:5-6 For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.***

It was 11PM, we were somewhere in Kansas on our way to Wisconsin for Christmas. We left Oklahoma around 5PM. We were driving through the night. We found this to be the best way to travel with 4 little ones on such a long journey. Clark started driving. I feed the girl's supper, they loved having a picnic in the van, then they all settled in for the night.

We stopped for gas and now it was my turn to drive. Clark had a bad cold and fell asleep immediately. I had only been driving a little while and I was getting really sleepy. There were no towns, no reception on the radio, just the sound of Clark snoring and the cold wind blowing. It was **so dark** with no other cars on the road.

I asked God to please help me stay awake. Clark needed his sleep so badly. I had barely finished my prayer when in front of me on the road, coming towards me, was a bright, yellow cross...then the headlights of the 18 wheeler. Adrenalin flowing I drove until the sunrise.

***Lord, thank you for being my light when darkness is all around. Help me to take your light and share it with those around me so they too can know your glory. Amen.***

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March 3, 2010

Lorie McDonald

***Isaiah 25:1 O LORD, you are my God; I will exalt you, I will praise your name; for you have done wonderful things, plans formed of old, faithful and sure.***

Typically when I think of praising God, I've focused only on the big picture. But in reading this passage, I was reminded of how easy is it for us to take things for granted – especially the little things. We all see God in a beautiful sunrise or sunset, in the quiet that a snow shower brings or in the laughter of our children. But how often do we really stop and thank him for the little things?

God is faithful to us. He promised us his son and fulfilled that promise and He loves us no matter what. In turn, we should remember his faithfulness as we praise him and make faithfulness to him and others a priority in our lives.

My great grandmother was a true Christian inspiration to me as she lived her life in faithfulness to God and family. She loved God with every ounce of her being and praised him every chance she got. I remember one day being at her home, which was built by my great grandfather. It was one of the only times I was ever alone with her because her home was always filled with family. We were in different rooms and after a while, I heard her talking. I went in to her room and found her sitting in a chair just talking. As I listened, I realized, she was talking to God. Her words were filled with gratitude to and for Him. In talking with several other family members, we all had a similar experience at some point. Mammie, as we called her, prayed for each and every one of her 5 children, 11 grand children, 19 great grandchildren and many others **by name** every single day. And more importantly, she thanked God throughout the day for all of her blessings – from a rain shower for her garden to having what she needed to bake one of her delicious pound cakes. What an inspiration!

In reflecting on this, I want to make it my goal to praise him more for all of the wonderful things he does in my life, especially those things we take for granted: a safe commute to work or school, a hug from one of my children, or finding my car keys in the morning.

***Lord, please keep me ever mindful of all of your blessings no matter how big or small and for the precious gift you gave us in your son! Amen***

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March 4, 2010

Janson Brown

***Mark 10:13-16 People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it." And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them..***

Jesus and the Little Children. Not a very deep verse but more one that has a powerful meaning to it. The disciples rebuked the children just like the devil in our everyday life trying to stop us from getting closer to God. Jesus says "Don't stop them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." He is stating that God receives everyone no matter race, color, how poor, age, and even how much you've sinned. In the kingdom of heaven there exists a spot for every person. Those children were touched and blessed by Christ Jesus. Even though we have not been physically touched by God, our hearts have been blessed. We are God's children and no matter what standards we have, live in, or follow we are blessed.

***Dear Lord we know that we sin everyday and sometimes we feel like you are nowhere near us. Lord help us to remember that we are one of your children and you have a plan for every one of us. Lord thank you for blessing us and I pray that you will forgive our many sins and help us to focus on the biggest thing in our busy lives. You! Amen.***

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March 5, 2010

Kristin Eckard

***Galatians 5: 22-26 By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, competing against one another, envying one another.***

Wow! What a great list and at the same time what a daunting challenge. To be more Christ-like is something we all struggle with every day and yet the list of "Fruits" listed are not so much centered around me, myself and I as they are on how I show Christ through me to others. They are examples God's character which is directed outward from himself toward us and which we should then direct out from ourselves to the world around us. The first, Love, is the very essence of God and really includes all of the others. The love of God expressed through us would be unselfish, unconditional and non-selective. It would seek the best for the other person without thought of what we might get in return. The "Joy of the Lord" would not so much be the emotion of happiness which can come and go but instead a deep rooted, and permanent appreciation of God's grace in the midst of and in spite of everything. The "Patience" of Christ in us is not quickly offended or irritated with others. It is also willing to wait for God's time, and trust in Him in every situation. "Kindness" is the action of love by seeing someone's need and reaching out to assist them. "Goodness" is a description of God's loving character and is often used to describe positive actions toward others. "Jesus always went about doing good" (Acts 10:38). God is "Faithful" to keep his promises. We show this "Fruit of the Spirit" by being dependable, reliable, trustworthy and loyal in our dealings with others. "Gentleness" is the firm and fair strength of God. It avoids force if at all possible but is not an example of weakness. It is not harsh or abrasive but instead is considerate of others. "Self-control", may be the hardest of all for us since we are fortunate enough to live in a place where we can get whatever we want whenever we want almost without limit. Fortunately, God does not want us to be out of control but instead wants us to be controlled from within by the Spirit. The best part of all of this is that God does not expect us to be able to do these things all on our own, instead they are "Fruits of the Spirit" that he works through us.

***Father, fill me with these fruits of the spirit, these good things that I may share them with the family of God and serve you. Amen***

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March 6, 2010

Tina Donahue

***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.***

This Psalm is a great one for me. Worshiping the Lord with singing is what I like to do. I love to sing and I love the songs we

sing in church. It is a very fulfilling way to worship for me. I often close my eyes and just feel the music. Sometimes when Gift of Grace sings, I see some of you close your eyes and I see your lips move. Hopefully you're singing along. Seeing others enjoy our music is an awesome kind of joy. So then how does God see our "joyful noises"?? I wonder if he closes his eyes and just feels the music, listens to the words and smiles thinking how beautiful that it is? He must. He gave that gift to us, I think...the gift to enjoy worshipping through song. Surely he enjoys it the way we do.

The Psalm also asks us to acknowledge that the Lord is God and to be thankful. I think most of us acknowledge the Lord to be God. I think the hard part is to always be thankful. Times are hard these days. There is a lot of uncertainty and unstableness. It is easy to get caught up in asking for a clear path, comfort in hard times, guidance or patience. But are we always thankful? You hear a lot of people say they are "blessed" but do we actually say the words "thank you" to God in prayer??

Lastly, our Psalm asks us to know that God is good and his love is unfailing. I am not sure I can wrap my head around the word "unfailing". As humans, we fail. So how can I fully understand unfailing love? It makes me think about our little dog, Spirit. She has unconditional and never failing devotion to me. The loyalty is so sweet. It humbles me and warms my heart how dedicated she is. Dogs are cool like that. So how does God's unfailing love for us and his continual faithfulness make us feel? How do we react?

Perhaps it makes us want to shout with JOY and worship him with gladness!!

***Dear God, we acknowledge you as Lord and we are so thankful for all that we are and all that we have. We know without you we are nothing. Put a joyful song in our hearts today and worship with us! We always want to feel your unfailing love for us and to be able to shout it out with JOY!! Amen.***

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March 7, 2010

Don and Susan Heatherly

***Jeremiah 31:10 Hear the word of the LORD, O nations, and declare it in the coastlands far away; say, "He who scattered Israel will gather him, and will keep him as a shepherd a flock."***

I read this passage and I think about how good God is to us and how we can trust him to take care of us and give us what we need in life. It also makes me think of how God knows what we need and what should be most important to us in our life here on earth.

We have just recently become grandparents. This life event really makes you step back and reflect on what is most important. Up until you become grandparents, you've spent your life focusing on getting material things. You've worked and worked your whole life to get a nice home, raise your kids and give them an education, get nice things, and travel to exotic places. But when you see your grandchild for the first time, all these things are no longer so important. You get a rush of newly found love and the realization that God is good and provides us the most important of things on this earth.

Cherish the important things in life that God gives you: family, health, love, nature, friends, and peace. One of my favorite images of God is when we say in church, "May God hold you in the palm of his hand". That has such a warm, secure, caring, and trusting feeling. I think the palm of God's hand is never more present as when we are with our family and friends. When my grandson is in my arms, I feel like we are both in God's arms and nothing can harm us.

May God keep you and your's in the palm of his hands and watch over you with his grace and love.

God's peace be with you.

***Loving God, watch over us and enable us to focus our time and energy on the kinds of things that are most important in life. Make us examples for others so that they might see and experience your redeeming grace. Amen***



March 8, 2010

Patti and Trevor Rubenzer

***I Corinthians 15:35-41 But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?" Fool! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And as for what you sow, you do not sow the body that is to be, but a bare seed, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body. Not all flesh is alike, but there is one flesh for human beings, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. There are both heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one thing, and that of the earthly is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; indeed, star differs from star in glory.***

One thing that I have noticed reading the New Testament of the Bible is how full it is with references to metaphors related to agriculture. While less than two percent of the current U.S. population engages in agriculture as an occupation, the percentage at the time of the Apostle Paul's missionary work was much higher. While we don't have exact figures, we can reasonably guess that well over 75 percent of people made their living from the soil. It should be no surprise then that Paul, guided by the Holy Spirit, uses the seed as a metaphor for our life in the world to come.

The amazing thing about seeds is that they must actually die in order for a new plant to come to life. The seed falls, or is picked, from the plant or tree. The farmer then buries the seed in the ground. The seed literally dies from the inside out as it becomes the first nourishment for a new plant. When people die, their earthly bodies decompose (much like the seed to which Paul refers). Many faithful Jews from Jesus' time would wait for the bodies to decompose, then deposit the bones in an ossuary. To common people struggling to understand the miracle of bodily resurrection, Paul's choice of analogies must have made perfect sense. The seed decomposes, but this is required for new life to exist. In the same way that God creates a new body out of the decomposing seed, God creates a new body for us. The only difference is that the new body that God creates from us is everlasting (hence the reference to heavenly and earthly bodies). Out of our earthy death comes heavenly life in Christ.

The thought of our own earthly demise is almost never a comforting thought. Paul reminds us, as he reminded the people in the Congregation at Corinth, that our earthy death is a requirement for eternal life. If our "seed" is planted in the fertile soil of faith in Jesus, God will give us a body as he has determined.

***Lord God, as we contemplate Jesus' journey and ultimate sacrifice during this Lenten season, give us the confidence to face our mortality as Jesus did. Grant us the faith necessary to understand that, because Jesus died for our sins, we must only die once in Christ to gain eternal life. Please grant comfort to those who have recently lost love ones. Fill their hearts with the knowledge that the seed planted in death will result in new life. Amen.***



March 9, 2010

Candace Elmore

***Lamentations 3:25-26 The LORD is good to those who wait for him, to the soul that seeks him. It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.***

As I was searching for this passage in my beloved grandmother's Bible, I found that page after page there were notes and prayers jotted down, phrases underlined, and answers to questions that my grandmother found in Scripture. She read her Bible everyday for a long as I can remember, and she always trusted in the Lord, waited for His answers, and accepted what He had planned for her life. And the Lord was wonderfully good to her.

Her strong faith and her unwavering patience have helped me to strengthen my relationship with the Lord and to seek Him in all I do. If I am struggling in any aspect of my life, I think of my grandmother and know that she would say, "Honey, seek the Lord in all you do, and he will take such good care of you." And He always does.

***Lord, help me to seek you in all of times of happiness and in all my times of strife. Help me to wait patiently for You, for I know You will always be here for me. Amen.***

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March 10, 2010

Bill and Mary Troisi

***Luke 17:11-19 On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, they called out, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" When he saw them, he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were made clean. Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. He prostrated himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. Then Jesus asked, "Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they? Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" Then he said to him, "Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well."***

During his earthly ministry Jesus says some sad things: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" "Peter, do you love me?" "Judas, is it with a kiss that you are betraying the Son of Man?" "Into your hands I commit my spirit." All of these statements are agonizing. Unfortunately he has to keep saying, "Where are the other nine?" Many of us go to God through prayer when we are in need of something or his healing. In great love and mercy, God often blesses us with precisely what we ask of him. Yet with so many blessings lavished on us, do our prayers remain focused upon getting more rather than thanking and praising him for his generosity and grace? Is God saying, "Where is the thanks?"

***Almighty God and loving Father, forgive me for my self-centered preoccupation. You have blessed me with so much and I seem to thank you for so little. I praise you for your selfless love, your abundant mercy, your costly grace, your faithfulness to your promises, and your assurance of my future with you. Thank you for the breath I breathe, the food I eat, the clothes I wear, and the place I lay my head at night. For these, and thousands of other blessings from your hand, I thank you. In Jesus name. Amen.***

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March 11, 2010

Pegi Roberts

***Jeremiah 31:31-33 The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.***

Covenant - an agreement, contract, convention, treaty, promise, or a pledge - or a disaster waiting to happen. Just look at the Bible for examples from the very beginning! It wasn't enough for Adam to get to walk WITH GOD in person every day. the simple agreement to stay away from forbidden fruit was too much. Thankfully, God picked up the pieces and made a new plan. Later, the Israelites messed up when their Promised Land of Milk and Honey, all for the very reasonable price of avoiding worship of other gods, was blown away. Too bad, so sad! They messed it up, and another covenant was broken. The Bible is FULL of this type of thing! Why does God still bother?

If I had a penny for every time I messed up, making such a mess of what should have been simple, I would be the richest woman in the world. But reality shows me that God will not give me or anyone else pennies for dumb mistakes. Yet, OH THE RICHES. YES! We STILL get them, no matter how much we mess up! God says that he is not going to give us another new law. no more forbidden fruit or tempting pledges, but instead he's going away from the stubborn, stiff-necked head, and aiming **straight for the heart!**

God's dwelling in our heart beats through every vein, and helps guide us in those tough choices. Will we still mess up? YES, of course! But as God's promise of love and grace beats through our veins, the pain heals, the depression lifts, and vital energy returns as we learn to listen to the heartbeat powered by God's love. The love and non-breakable vow of everlasting life calls us back. no punishment from God, only that which Satan throws our way through guilt and shame. Instead, God uses each experience to grow us in faith, building our dependence upon His great mercy and love.

When our entire being beats with blood flooded with grace, forgiveness and mercy, our hearts actions speak louder than any words to the rest of the world, and all can know Him through our love. We can all celebrate the RICHNESS of life in Jesus Christ, the REAL covenant, unbreakable promise, contract and treaty, and pledge of everlasting life! WOW. HOW RICH WE ARE. bring on those pennies!

***Gracious God, your love for us is greater than we can ever begin to imagine. Thank you creating a covenant with us that binds us to you not matter what might happen to us in life. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.***

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March 12, 2010

JoAnn Dixon

***Psalm 57:1-3 Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me, for in you my soul takes refuge; in the shadow of your wings I will take refuge, until the destroying storms pass by. I cry to God Most High, to God who fulfills his purpose for me. He will send from heaven and save me, he will put to shame those who trample on me. Selah God will send forth his steadfast love and his faithfulness.***

I have asked myself many times what God's purpose for me could be, and am I worthy of his praise? It took me 50+ years to finally know in my heart what God's will for me is. I was delivering Mobile Meals one Thursday morning and one of the sweet ladies I delivered to looked me in the eye and asked me could she give me a hug? Of course I'm not turning down a love gesture like that, and as she hugged me, she told me that she seeks God in me every Thursday morning. Well, I cried all the way to my next stop!

That morning I realized that God is my shelter from the storm and His purpose for me is to be a servant to others. He has Blessed me by allowing me to be a small part of His love for all people. I have the opportunity to share a meal of nourishment, share a smile, share conversation, and most of all I get to share a small part of me with others. God has a wonderful purpose for me and yes, I receive His grace and praise His holy name.

***Dear Lord, my soul takes refuge in You and Lord, you protect me under your wings of faithfulness. Please help guide me and give me the courage to fulfill your purpose for me. I am but a humble servant and yet You show me I am worthy of your unconditional love. Thank you, Lord, for your mercy and grace. Thank you for giving me the chance to share my heart with others. In your name I pray. Amen.***

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March 13, 2010

Wendy Griffin

***James 2:14-17 What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.***

For Lutherans, this is a difficult Scripture passage to comprehend. We are not an "If, then" religion (if we do good works, then we will be saved). Rather, we are a "Because, then" religion (because we have been justified by the grace of God, then we will do good works).

Thank God we do not have to ensure our salvation through works. How many acts are enough – what if I fall one short? If my faith is great, can I get away with doing fewer works? Exactly what objectives do I need to meet to gain my "heavenly" bonus?

Trying to ensure our salvation through works is very self-centered ("It's all about ME!"). Instead, because we know we are saved, we can radiate God's love to others through our works. We become messengers of the good news without hidden agendas. What a blessing!

***Thank you, God, for the grace you have given me. Help my actions reflect your love for all people, and let the message of your good news be expressed in all my works today. It is in Jesus' name I pray, for there is no better example and guide than the one who gave his life for me.***

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March 14, 2010

Jeff Brown

***I John 4:7-8 Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.***

The first epistle of John mentions various forms of love 43 times within the writing. That's a lot of discussion about love, hopefully we get it!

We are to continue to love one another as he has blessed us with this life here on earth to live Christ-like lives until we are called home. That's all easier said than done isn't it? It's a continuous thought process daily to love one another.

It's sometime difficult to live by that principal. Especially when the teacher is glaring at us for late homework assignments to be turned in, the supervisor looking for results in our over budget projects, the coach yelling at us to run faster and jump higher. These are just a few things that happen to us on a daily basis. I'm sure you can quickly add a few examples yourself!

Hard to show the love to these folks isn't it?

Well, that's what I mean about a continuous thought process. It's easy to give-in to first impressions on the situation, but it can be turned around very quickly if you reflect on what God wants us to do.

The Teacher, Supervisor and Coach all are working to do what's best for us. Looking out for our best interests and caring for us. They want us to succeed, if we can acknowledge that it's a lot easier to appreciate and yes share God's love with them.

***Dear Lord, we are thankful for this day and the brothers and sisters in Christ that you allowed us to meet and come in contact with. We pray that you give us patience and kindness towards one another and give us a breath of your love to touch our hearts, that we may pass that love on to others.***

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March 15, 2010

Wendy Griffin

***James 1:12-16 Blessed is anyone who endures temptation. Such a one has stood the test and will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him. No one, when tempted, should say, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil and he himself tempts no one. But one is tempted by one's own desire, being lured and enticed by it; then, when that desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and that sin, when it is fully grown, gives birth to death. Do not be deceived, my beloved.***

Temptation is all around us - every minute of every day. It is part of our "humanness." One of the easiest temptations we are lured into is judging someone else for succumbing to temptation, and yet failing to see the temptations to which we have succumbed. We like to put temptations into categories – big and small. My overeating under stress is not so bad as my buddy's drinking problem. My little internet shopping "habit" is not as bad as the rumor I heard the other day about a co-worker.

Verse 12 reminds us that anyone who endures temptation is blessed. Let us be blessed this Lenten season by not succumbing to the temptation of judging others' sins more harshly than our own. Rather, let us lift up others in prayer and remember there are no degrees or categories of temptation – big or small, we all fall short.

***Dear Jesus, help me to recognize that temptations come in all forms – and that they are all measured the same. Help me keep my head and heart focused on enduring my own temptations, instead of pointing out the failures of others. Thank you for loving me in spite of my being so darned human all time!***

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March 16, 2010

Teresa Foster

***I Thessalonians 5:23-24*** *May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.*

Years ago there was a Gallop poll that indicated 80 percent of the population considered themselves Christians. However, the poll also indicated that only 40 percent of the population knew who wrote the Sermon on the Mount. Gallop was trying to find out how many just claimed to be a Christian and how many truly tried to live their lives like a Christian. The poll concluded that only around ten percent who claimed to be Christians could defend what Christianity is and live at a high spiritual level of commitment.

When writing his letters, Paul uses the word “sanctify”, which means to make holy or to set apart for sacred use. Some believe that justification and sanctification go hand in hand. If we believe we have been justified by the salvation event of Jesus dying for our sins, then we should be experiencing sanctification by developing spiritually. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus spoke of the “sayers” versus the “doers”.

So, in verse 23, sanctify is used as an “action” verb. But, this does not mean that God will reach down, wave His hand, and “sanctify” you. It is up to us. Paul is wishing that just the belief in God and the love for Him will make us want to live as God would want us to live. It would make us want to be in the presence of those that believe the same as we. And, if we were not in the presence of those that lived as we live, then we would be true Christians and show those that are not, how wonderful it is to choose a path such as ours.

There were those that tried to teach me the Bible and about faith through my early years. For some reason, I had to become an adult to truly “get it”. The acceptance and understanding was all on me. I do believe however, it took someone putting it in a little different format for me to understand. It was the use of the word, “rejoice”. I learned so much more about that word after I became a Lutheran.

I had begun to hear that word over and over again. Then, I began to work with youth on a regular basis on local, state, and national levels. While studying curriculums and planning events with other ministers and lay people, it led me to be more inquisitive. That led me to be more comfortable in speaking about my faith and the result was to live more in my faith. I finally realized that living a life of serving others was how I was supposed to live and it has blessed me fully. So, I am in the process of being “sanctified”. In fact, I have learned how to “rejoice”.

***Heavenly Father, please help us to learn so much about our faith that we cannot help but to live our faith. May we see that in order to help others want to become true Christians, we must first show them how wonderful it is to live as a Christian. It should happen without thinking. And only by being “doers”, instead of “sayers” do we truly understand. Thank you for all of your many blessings. Amen***

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March 17, 2010

JoAnn Dixon

***Psalm 3*** *O LORD, how many are my foes! Many are rising against me; many are saying to me, "There is no help for you in God." But you, O LORD, are a shield around me, my glory, and the one who lifts up my head. I cry aloud to the LORD, and he answers me from his holy hill. I lie down and sleep; I wake again, for the LORD sustains me. I am not afraid of ten thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around. Rise up, O LORD! Deliver me, O my God! For you strike all my enemies on the cheek; you break the teeth of the wicked. Deliverance belongs to the LORD; may your blessing be on your people!*

Have you ever felt like some people are against you and no matter what you do it seems like there is always someone who wishes you failure? After working in the emergency services field for over 30 years, you either start feeling a little paranoid, or maybe you're just cranky. Sometimes you have to fight off that little pity party brewing in the back of your mind.

I keep a visual tool on my computer monitor to help me through those times when I feel like the world was against me and I got this tool from Pastor Lane. I have a label marked CHOOSE JOY which has helped me through many a tough day not only at work, but in my personal life as well. I know, as David did, that the Lord is a shield around me, he bestows His glory on me and

he lifts up my head. The Lord sustains me and therefore I am.

***Dear Lord, please help us to have the courage to face our fears and know in our hearts You are our Savior. I ask that you help us remember that You are our shield and our light. Lord, we thank you for your glory and deliverance from our enemies. Most of all Lord, thank you for your love. Amen.***

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March 18, 2010

Gary Poeta

***II Samuel 22:1-4 David spoke to the LORD the words of this song on the day when the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul. He said: The LORD is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge, my savior; you save me from violence. I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies.***

We have all heard and read about David. As a youth, he slew the Philistine giant, Goliath, with a slingshot. He was a mighty warrior and a great king. He succeeded at most everything that he attempted. Why did things go so well for David? He followed God's ways. He listened to God, and did what God told him to do. When God talked ... David listened. Even so, there were problems. When God rejected Saul as king and chose David as Saul's replacement, Saul plotted to kill David. When David sinned with Bathsheba, God punished David (but God did not desert David). When the people of Judah anointed David as their king, the people of Israel chose Ishbaal (Saul's son) to be their king, and the kingdom was divided. There were battles with surrounding peoples and conflicts with the people of Israel. That brings us to today's reading. David is thanking God for all that God has done for him. David is affirming God as the source of his strength and that he puts all of his trust in God. We would all do well to follow David's example and put our unwavering trust in God. He will not desert us, and He knows our needs. As we make our Lenten journey, it is a good time for us to reflect on how much God has done for us.

***Father, thank you for all that you have done for me. Thank you for the many ways that you have blessed me, for your steadfast love, and most of all, for sending your son to be my Lord and Savior. Let me never forget that all that is good comes from you. It is in the name of your son, Jesus, which I pray. Amen.***

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March 19, 2010

Shelli Slice

***Mark 4:35-41 On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"***

I seldom worry because it is in Him that I have faith to carry me through the storms of life. The last year has quite possibly been one of the most trying, difficult times of my life. My marriage ended, I lost financial stability and independence, lost my job, moved twice, my daughter had surgery, my house was broken into, and some of my closest relationships were jeopardized by miscommunication and stress. During all of this, I was leading my children in their adjustment to living between two homes with their newly separated parents....and in the background I was getting to know myself again, learning how to adjust to my new life.

I sometimes felt that I would crumble under the weight of it all. My saving grace has been that which He has for me. Christ is my rock, refuge, and source of eternal strength. Just as the disciples in the boat, I, too, have my storms quelled by the Lord. When I worry, I insult Him and rebuke my own faith. No more. I trust He will always give me the strength, wisdom, peace, and courage to endure my trials and conquer my demons.

***Gracious and Holy Lord, I pray you guide me through this life on a faithful and righteous path to you. Help me to remember your love for me and take comfort in the shelter and peace you provide. Amen.***

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March 20, 2010

Jeanne Thompson

***Galatians 6:1-2 My friends, if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Take care that you yourselves are not tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.***

The “bearing of one another’s burdens” was a very clear concept to us this year. Our daughter Amanda and her husband were expecting their second child and early on in the pregnancy there were health concerns. Our daughter developed gestational diabetes and her baby seemed to be very small, not growing quite as much as her doctor’s had hoped. Tests showed the umbilical cord only had two vessels instead of the normal three. This left us with lots of questions of the unknown. With us in South Carolina and them in Michigan the distance seemed to compound the worry since email and phone conversations were our means of communication. We added Amanda and her unborn baby to Joy’s prayer list and for all of those weekly prayers we were very grateful. Turning to the internet, by email we asked all our family and friends to keep Amanda and the baby in prayer and updated everyone as best we could as the weeks went by. It was such a tremendous comfort to hear from people all expressing concern and assuring us that God was hearing our prayers. Some days when the worry got the best of us and we felt worn out petitioning God for an answer, it was the prayers of others that held us up. A few weeks before our little one was due it was necessary *to* deliver him by emergency c-section as Amanda developed pre-eclampsia. When we got the word that a delivery was imminent and flight arrangements were being made for a trip to Michigan for the birth, we emailed our prayer warriors with the update. Getting on the plane to head north we felt comforted that so many people were praying for our daughter, her baby and for us. To have people willing and ready to bear the burden of our worry for us was a wonderful gift to our family and we will be forever grateful.

***Dear God: Thank you for bringing people into our lives who can be our prayer warriors on our behalf. Even though we believe you have everything worked out for our good, we thank you for hearing all our prayers and in your mercy answering when we call out to you. Amen***

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March 21, 2010

Julie Watson

***Matthew 16:24-26 Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?"***

It is so easy to get caught up in day to day living and all the distractions this life has to offer, but God wants us to realize that He always must be the center of our lives and our thoughts. If we put all our time and energy into striving to obtain “things”, there is not much left over to give to God. Our lives belong to God and our goal should be to invest our time and talents to his glory. God wants us to enjoy the life he has given us without letting “things” become our masters. In denying ourselves, we must be ready and willing to surrender our lives to his will, live for him and serve others.

***Lord, you ask us to deny ourselves and follow you but this is not an easy task for us humans. There are so many things in our live competing for our attention that sometimes your voice might be drowned out by all the noise. Strengthen us in our resolve to follow your command to “take up our cross and follow you, and help us to hear your “still small voice” as we make decisions in our lives. We ask all this in your most holy name. Amen***

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March 22, 2010

Jeanne Thompson

***Psalm 139 :1-6 O LORD, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away. You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, O LORD, you know it completely. You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain it.***

In the past eleven years I have moved five times. Every new house, every new city, every change has put me in the situation of having to find my way. Making new friends in a new environment, finding my way to the basics like the grocery store and gas station, driving in a new location, all challenge me. At times I have been lost and spent countless hours consulting maps and asking strangers for directions.

The psalmist write that God is always with me. He knows where I am even when I don't. When we made our last move to South Carolina in the spring of 2007 my research had not found a Lutheran church in Duncan by looking on the internet. I had always put in Duncan as the location and all my search results proved fruitless.....until one day I missed my turn at the light at Reidville Road and I drove through the intersection into Moore. As I traveled down the road, I looked for a place to turn around, to get my bearings. That is when I turned around in the driveway of Joy Lutheran Church.

I may have been lost that day, but God had a plan already in his mind. He lead me to Joy and we have been happy ever since. How wonderful is our God that he always is present with us and knows just where we need to be. What peace and assurance we can find in knowing God has everything under control

***Dear father God: Thank you for being with us every day. Thank you for your spirit to comfort and be with us even when we are in uncertain times and locations. You never leave us and for that we are your grateful children. Amen.***

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March 23, 2010

David Clough

***Ezekiel 16:62-63 I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall know that I am the LORD, in order that you may remember and be confounded, and never open your mouth again because of your shame, when I forgive you all that you have done, says the Lord GOD.***

I've never sinned or felt ashamed about what I've done. I'm sure it's the same way with you. No, it's not about eating Chocolate. God tells us we will remember our sins and be ashamed. I think He knows more about us than ourselves. Every day we ask for forgiveness. Every week at church we corporately and individually ask for forgiveness. Is the asking complete with honesty about oneself and repentance (renouncing our sins, changing our ways and turning our will towards God)? Remembering His grace and love will help us change our ways and move towards God.

***Lord, we thank you for everything you have done for us. We thank you for your covenant that is so vital to our lives and we are forever grateful. Sometimes we may not come to you with honesty about ourselves. Help us change our ways and turn our will towards you. Your forgiveness and love provides us with the comfort we need to live our everyday lives. Through your Grace and Mercy, Amen.***

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March 24, 2010

Glenn Thomas

***Philippians 2:1-5 If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus.***

Verses 3-5 truly hit home with me. I think this passage from the Bible strikes at the core of what it means to be a Christian. Each Sunday at Joy, I feel re-energized in my faith and I attempt to use that guidance in my daily life. Often, in my line of work, greed gets in the way of treating others with respect and kindness. This is sometimes due to corporate pressure and sometimes due to individual competitiveness. I find myself having to pause and act in a non-selfish manner on some days, even when it is against the best financial interest of the company. I have a direct impact on whether or not people have the necessary funds to feed their families. It would be selfish of me not to give when I can. Having gone through some tough times lately, I understand this now more than ever. It is the giving and compassionate heart that is truly wealthy. I hope I can continue to serve others and expand my heart's wealth beyond what I could ever imagine.

***Dear Lord, help us to be your hands and voice and feet in everything we do. Remind us to continue to fill the shopping cart for The Carpenter's Table Food Bank, to pat our neighbor's back to offer encouragement, and to give offerings to Helping Hands. Thank you, Jesus, for providing all of our needs. Amen.***

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March 25, 2010

Becky Fleck

***Psalm 1:1-3 Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or take the path that sinners tread, or sit in the seat of scoffers; but their delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law they meditate day and night. They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither. In all that they do, they prosper.***

Joy comes by obeying God!

On occasion, friends and associates influence us in subtle ways by discredit to our Lord. If we associate with these individuals, it may cause us to sin. True friends will help draw you closer to God, resulting in God's blessings.

God judges us on the basis of our faith in him and our response to his will. Those who try diligently to obey God's will are blessed. They are the fruit bearing trees by the river bank, with strong roots, that God promised to watch over.

Those who do not trust and obey God, have meaningless lives. We need contact with these people to be able to witness, but we must not join their behavior; for it separates us from our source of nourishment.

We must soak up God's word as a tree soaks up water, if our actions and attitudes are to honor God. To achieve, we must have God's word in our heart.

Read your Bible (God's Law) and meditate day and night.

***Dear Lord, help us to learn to live in your word. Help us to reach out to others to share your teachings. Guide us in all that we do and give us the strength to give you the honor and glory that is yours. Amen.***

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March 26, 2010

Holly Paul Edwards

***Colossians 3:12-13 As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.***

Did you get a box of chocolates, a bouquet of roses, even a heart-adorned pair of socks or boxer shorts for Valentine's Day? Surely you did not forget to show those special people in your life how much you care about them? In numerous ways, today's commercially-oriented society delineates when and how we should express our emotions, with promises of dire results should we not follow their suggestions. Love (or the lack thereof) is a relentlessly persistent theme in the books we read, the movies we watch, and the music we listen to.

But what does God tell us about loving each other? We are all familiar with Christ's directive, to "Love one another." What does this mean, and how are we to do this? Paul in his letter to the embattled church in Colosse (in modern-day Turkey) says that we are to treat each other with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, and forgiveness. He goes on to say that "Love...binds them all together in perfect unity."

When! That's quite a list—and I for one must admit to failing miserably in all of those areas. I don't recall seeing a Hallmark card that might soothe my wounded psyche and boost my faltering self-esteem when I confront the reality of my shortcomings. Fortunately for me—and for ALL of us—God's love is all-encompassing, boundless, and eternal. As we struggle with our human shortcomings, we can rest in the assurance that we are Loved and Forgiven.

***Precious Lord, we can never live up to the standards which you have set for us, but with your infinite love and forgiveness surrounding and upholding us, we will strive to meet these goals as we live our lives in your light and grace. Amen.***

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March 27, 2010

David Clough

***Hebrews 11:1-3 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Indeed, by faith our ancestors received approval. By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible.***

We have this wonderful area of lawn in front of Joy Lutheran. I pray that it will be used for an expansion of our sanctuary with thousands of people worshipping God! Before this happens in the future let us place a huge marquee with orange scrolling letters that say: "DIVE INTO THE LIGHT"

***Lord, in our times of strife our faith may be shaken or broken apart. We acknowledge that during our difficult times we may not see or understand. Because of Your word and Your covenant we can be confident, certain, and reassured in what we have not seen. With the reality of hope we can dive into the light and see what we thought was invisible. Amen.***

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March 28, 2010

Rhonda Kennedy

***Psalms 118:10-12 All nations surrounded me; in the name of the LORD I cut them off! They surrounded me, surrounded me on every side; in the name of the LORD I cut them off! They surrounded me like bees; they blazed like a fire of thorns; in the name of the LORD I cut them off!***

Do you ever feel that things going on in your life are like the bees (as mentioned above)? Like a swarm of bees, things in life come at us from every direction, stinging us, hurting us, and almost fatal for some of us. Does it often seem like there is no safety from the "bees"? One way to get away from the real bees is to get into a body of water. Let us remember the salvation we have from the waters of Baptism. As Christians, we must remember that our safety is in the refuge that we have in our Lord Jesus Christ.

***Father God, let us always come to you as the "bees" in our lives pursue us. Lord, we know that you can put a stop to the troubles in our lives and keep us strong. Thank you for saving us, for all that you do for us. In your name we pray. Amen.***

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March 29, 2010

Pegi Roberts

***Romans 3:27-28 Then what becomes of boasting? It is excluded. By what law? By that of works? No, but by the law of faith. For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law.***

Taking Robi-love to get her ears pierced for her 12<sup>th</sup> birthday was incredible fun! I don't know who bragged more, Robi calling all of her friends to share the surprise or me telling all of my friends how well I gagged her! I used some lame excuse to get her to the mall, and she had NO IDEA what was coming. When we arrived at the store, Robi's friends were there getting their ears pierced, bragging away, and I was so proud of her celebrating their joy. I couldn't stand it anymore, so I grabbed Robi and exclaimed that she didn't know it but Robi would be getting hers done, too! It made me so proud to brag with her, and the joy and shock on her face made the moment even sweeter.

Marking this milestone in her maturity will forever be precious to me, and hopefully to her, but I am constantly drawn back to the One really worthy of the glory and 'bragging' rights. I really can't take credit for her inner beauty which shines in her love and care for others. I have messed up so many times as a Mom that I am often amazed she made it out of toddlerhood. I worked too much, was selfish too often, was tired and angry more than I should have been, and many times could not have survived another day of Motherhood without my incredible husband and my Lord and Savior. Each time I want to brag and say that I did it, I must bite my tongue and remember that it is not through my devotion to God's law or perfect walk of faith, but ONLY by the grace of God that He blessed me with (because I could never earn it) that I can even rejoice in sharing in this blessing of a family.

Every time I look at those precious tiny ears and those sparkling earrings, I can thank God for taking us so far; and if I have an inkling to brag, I must remember to give Him the credit, thanks to the gift of faith from Him, for Him and of Him. What can you celebrate that you could never claim to earn on your own? Aren't we so blessed that God blesses us so incredibly, faithfully, and lovingly? Now THAT, I can brag about! To God Be the Glory! AMEN

***Loving God, sustain us in your grace that we might ever rejoice in the gifts you have given us. Empower us to see you and your creative hand in every aspect of our lives, in Jesus' precious name, Amen.***

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March 30, 2010

Mary Ann Bethea

***Psalm 85:1-13 LORD, you were favorable to your land; you restored the fortunes of Jacob. You forgave the iniquity of your people; you pardoned all their sin. You withdrew all your wrath; you turned from your hot anger. Restore us again, O God of our salvation, and put away your indignation toward us. Will you be angry with us forever? Will you prolong your anger to all generations? Will you not revive us again, so that your people may rejoice in you? Show us your steadfast love, O LORD, and grant us your salvation. Let me hear what God the LORD will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts. Surely his salvation is at hand for those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land. Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other. Faithfulness will spring up from the ground, and righteousness will look down from the sky. The LORD will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase. Righteousness will go before him, and will make a path for his steps.***

When I first read over this Psalm, I thought of a recent conversation I had with my grown sons, Walter and Tim. I was telling them how I had overheard a grown son talking so disrespectfully and in an ugly manner to his mother. I made a comment as to how I could never even dream one of my grown children speaking to me that way and how I would have responded to them had they treated me so disrespectfully. Everyone laughed at that, but Tim immediately reached over and took my hand, and said, "Mom, I'm so sorry I used to talk to you that way." I was a little taken aback, but answered, "Tim, you are so forgiven for that...don't even think about it anymore." Tim and I had a very, well, at times, tumultuous relationship when he was growing up. He often wanted an answer immediately and would go on and on and on...until we were yelling at each other. We had many "knock, down, drag out" emotional confrontations. But as he has matured into a wonderful, thoughtful young adult, we have had many heart to heart conversations, and there has been so much healing in our relationship.

Our Heavenly Father made us to be in relationship with Him, and he is always right here and ready to listen to what is in our hearts and on our minds, to forgive us when we come to him repentantly for what we have done or not done. During this Holy Week, is there something you need to repent of in order to bring you closer to God and to prepare for the most glorious of Easter Days? Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you if there is something you need to confess. Emmanuel--our "with us God" is ready to say, "You are forgiven for that, don't even think about it anymore!"

***Dear Holy Spirit, reveal to me anything that is keeping me from being closer to you. Forgive me for these things and restore me again, O God of my salvation, and put away your indignation towards me. Revive me again so that as Easter comes, I may rejoice anew in you. Show me your steadfast love, O LORD, and grant me your salvation. Amen.***

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March 31, 2010

Chris Troisi and Brandy Willenberg

***John 13:21-27 After saying this Jesus was troubled in spirit, and declared, "Very truly, I tell you, one of you will betray me." The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he was speaking. One of his disciples--the one whom Jesus loved--was reclining next to him; Simon Peter therefore motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. So while reclining next to Jesus, he asked him, "Lord, who is it?" Jesus answered, "It is the one to whom I give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish." So when he had dipped the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas son of Simon Iscariot. After he received the piece of bread, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, "Do quickly what you are going to do."***

Imagine that, somehow, you gain the knowledge that a close friend is going to betray you. How would you treat that person? Would you avoid them? Scream at them? Act as if nothing was wrong?

Jesus already knew that he would be betrayed. He knew that he must die on the cross to save mankind. Instead of stopping Judas or turning him over to the other disciples, he let him go. He doesn't treat him with contempt. He doesn't scorn him. He only utters

eight simple words – a temperate command to his comrade.

“What you are about to do, do quickly.”

In these verses Jesus teaches us a very important lesson about love. He shows that, even in the most difficult circumstances, you can still show love to all – even those who hurt you.

*Father of Love, we all can feel scared and confused like Judas. Help us to always put our faith in You and help us to love others as Your Son taught us. Amen.*

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April 1, 2010

Tina Reynolds

*John 13:1-20 Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you." For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean." After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord--and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them. I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But it is to fulfill the scripture, 'The one who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.' I tell you this now, before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am he. Very truly, I tell you, whoever receives one whom I send receives me; and whoever receives me receives him who sent me."*

Peter's response to Christ's service, purpose and love is often mimicked in my own life and struggles. I question God, what he allows, or his plans. Sometimes they make me sad, frustrated or even angry. God's response to me is similar to Christ's words to Peter " You don't realize now what I am doing but later you will understand" he clearly states in verse seven. Even though my knee-jerk thoughts are: okay! fine!!! ... since I have no other choice...but how *much* later God?? ...and *why* is it like this?

When I'm lucky, it is then that God's spirit, love, strength and presence reigns in me (washes over me) and overcomes my doubts or impetuous perspective. This miracle of faith! It's an ongoing struggle but one that is well worth having: a part in the divine with Christ and a natural step toward being a vessel for God by serving others with a profoundly grateful and patient heart.

Isn't that what Christ referred to in verse eight - "having a part of me?"

*Dear Lord, give us patience. And while we learn to wait, open our hearts, mind and eyes to better understand your word. Help us to work to be your hands, voice and eyes, and feet to the those in the world around us. Amen.*

†††

April 2, 2010

Leslie Montagne

***Luke 23: 44-49 It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Having said this, he breathed his last. When the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, "Certainly this man was innocent." And when all the crowds who had gathered there for this spectacle saw what had taken place, they returned home, beating their breasts. But all his acquaintances, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.***

Have you ever felt so horribly guilty about something you did or said to someone? Did it make you sick that you could not reverse the process and “take it back”? Surely, we all have. It is just this very theme that strikes me as a reader, as half of this passage is devoted to the reaction of the ranking Roman soldier and the witnesses present at Jesus’ crucifixion. What a frightening scene – darkness and wind upon the land in the middle of the day, the trembling of the ground, the shredding of the temple curtain.

The centurion and the witnesses realize they have made a terrible mistake, and it cannot be reversed. Jesus is dead, and the physical, visible result is so powerful it brings even non-believers to repentance and mourning, praising and calling out to God. Jesus’ life, ministry and teaching, formerly mocked and scorned now has instant viability, but it is too late; the Son of God is gone. The people will wrestle with their guilt, their faith, and their salvation. Can you imagine yourself on that hillside?

What can or should we do, to honor Jesus’ life and ministry before it is “too late” for us? The health and viability of the Christian faith and church in our world is still under siege, as it was at Jesus death. But together we **can and must** be strong witnesses to our faith – fishers of men, teachers of the Word, volunteers in service, caregivers for those who are hurting and in need. When others see our faith in action and the peace within that only God can give, perhaps they, too, will come to believe!

***Dear Heavenly Father, keep me centered on you and strong in my belief in your word. Help me to bring others to the knowledge of your great glory, mercy, power and love. Your brutal death changed our world. I thank and praise you for bringing me the promise of eternal life with God in heaven, through a life lived following you. Amen.***

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April 3, 2010

Trevor Rubenzer

***Matthew 27:57-61 When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who was also a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus; then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. So Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock. He then rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and went away. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb.***

Several years ago, my wife and I visited the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington National Cemetery. The tomb is under twenty four hour honor guard. The bodies of the unknown soldiers have been under guard every minute of every day since 1937. There is an inscription on the tomb that reads "Here rests in honored glory an American soldier known but to God." The changing of the guard ceremony is something that Patti and I will never forget.

In spite of all this ceremony, it strikes me that, to God, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier may seem strikingly unnecessary. God knows who is buried there. Assuming the soldiers understood the nature and good news of Christ, they had their ticket to Heaven immediately punched. One must reach the unavoidable conclusion that, as is the case in all deaths, the ceremonial nature of burial and perpetual care is designed for the living, not the dead. The ceremonies at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier comfort us; they remind us that the sacrifices of those who died in service to this country are never forgotten. When my grandmother died last spring, her wake and burial provided some sense of closure and comfort to me as well.

It appears to me that God used the rich Arimathean in a similar context. Jesus had just died the most humiliating and painful of deaths. Surely, the resurrection would have occurred even had Jesus’ body been buried in the same mass grave area with others who had been crucified. Yet, things may have been different for us. The fact that Jesus received a proper burial gave comfort to those who grieved his death (for few if any understood Jesus’ message about rebuilding the temple in three days). The burial in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea also served as the focal point of eye-witness accounts of the period just after the

resurrection. None of those accounts would have been possible without a proper burial (behind a large rock) in a known location. Had Jesus risen from an unnamed hole in the ground, his detractors on earth would have been able to argue more persuasively that his body had simply been stolen. None of this would have invalidated Jesus' sacrifice, of course. However, it is possible that the Gospel of Christ would have spread more slowly.

The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier is a monument built for the living, by the living. God does not need it. The tomb that Joseph of Arimathea gave up for Jesus provided comfort (and ultimately hope) for the living. As Jesus said before teaching his disciples to pray "Your Father knows what you need before you ask him."

*Lord God, it is often the case that we do not know what we need. Thank you for continuing to provide for us in spite of our inherent frailty. May we continue to find comfort, not only in the ceremonies and tangible symbols you provide us, but in the ultimate knowledge that we are yours forever through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen*

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*Thank you to everyone who contributed a devotion to our Joy Lenten Reflections 2010. May each of you who use this as a daily devotion through your Lenten journey receive a special blessing as we are “led to the foot of the cross and to the glorious day of Easter”.*