

**Devotions - July 6-12, 2008**  
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**Sunday, July 6**

*1 Samuel 3:1-19*

*<sup>7</sup> Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD,  
and the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him.*

I like this story of the calling of Samuel for many reasons, but what continues to bring me back time and time again is the sense that even though I think that I know the Lord and I think that I have a handle on the Lord's word as it is expressed to me and to God's people through the pages of scripture, there is always something more that I can learn and that God is in the process of revealing to me. Like Samuel I have to stop long enough to say, "*Speak Lord for I am listening.*" It is much easier to begin recreating God in my own image or the image that I am comfortable with. Like Samuel and Eli and all of the saints down through the generations, I will not fully know the Lord until God's Kingdom comes in its fullness. In the meantime my task is to listen for the voice of God in my life and to allow God to continue to reveal who God is in my life and for the world.

*Lord God, you continue to reveal yourself to me and to all believers. Grant me the wisdom and discernment to hear your voice and to understand your plan for me in the task of sharing the good news in the world. Amen*

**Monday, July 7**

***John 1:1-14***

*<sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory,  
the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.*

“*And the Word became flesh.*” Here again in a different way we hear that God loved us and the world so much that God chose to become flesh, a mere human being in order to more intimately reveal to us who God really is. As I look to other world religions and their understanding of God, believing and living becomes about trying to please God and to gain God's favor. We are reminded in these opening verses of John's gospel that God chose to create the world and God chose to become flesh and that God chose us **first** in order to set things right. Things that need setting right because of the wrong that we do and have done and will do again in the future.

Others may believe that they have to work their way up to God in order to gain God's favor. We who believe in Christ know and are continually reminded that God chose us first and comes down to us in personal ways. Just as the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, God continues to be in our midst.

***Lord God, you have come into our midst as the Word made flesh. May we be your word to the world around us. Grant us the peace and the encouragement in knowing that in whatever we do in your name, you go with us and guide us in confidence and peace. Amen***

**Tuesday, July 8**

***Romans 5:1-11***

*<sup>8</sup>But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.*

“*While we were still sinners.*” These words are a powerful reminder to me of the radical grace of God through Jesus Christ that Paul outlines in this letter to the Romans. Too often the results of sin in my life remain a stark reminder of my failures as a person, a husband, a father, a pastor, a friend .... In the midst of these failures, others may well have graciously forgiven me yet I hold onto the pain and the guilt. Paul reminds us in this passage that we need to move on, and that we can move on because we have been forgiven in Christ. To live in the guilt of the past is to deny the work of Christ that has already taken place.

In Christ we have been set free, “free of sin, death and the power of the devil” (2<sup>nd</sup> article of the Creed, Luther’s Small Catechism). Set free of sin we are charged with living as Jesus has called us and putting the the old life of sin behind.

***Lord God, we thank you for recognizing that we are unable to free ourselves from the grasp of sin. Thank you for reminding us that it is not our job to earn your grace, but rather to live in your grace giving you praise and thanksgiving. Amen***

**Wednesday, July 9**

*1 Thessalonians 5:16-22*

*<sup>21</sup>but test everything; hold fast to what is good;*

I have found encouragement in this admonition to test everything. It gives me the freedom to ask the question, "What is God telling me here?" as I read the scriptures. It is not an invitation to anything goes. But rather an invitation to ask questions and challenge ideas keeping in mind the wisdom of the rest of scripture, the wisdom of the prophets, the knowledge of what is right and wrong and of course the guiding of the Spirit. I find liberating the freedom to let scripture speak freely to me and guide me in the midst of life's struggles. So "test everything" and trust God.

*Gracious God, thank you for the freedom to seek you in the places in which we live and struggle and seek guidance. Encourage us in our study and graciously show us your purpose and direction for our lives. Amen.*

**Thursday, July 10**

***Colossians 3:1-17***

*<sup>17</sup>And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

The freedom that we have in God's gracious mercy through Jesus Christ would be easy to abuse. Without understanding that freedom in Christ is the freedom to live as Christ has demonstrated living life for us, we might be tempted to live as we wanted instead of the way God desires. In comprehending the great freedom that we have when our sin is removed from the picture and each day is a new beginning, we find the way of Christ to be an opportunity to live life to its fullest measure. Living life to God and with Christ is not a cafeteria plan in which we pick and choose that which suits us best, rather it is living for Christ in everything that we do, say, think, share ... In short, it is living all that we do to the glory of God and enjoying the blessings of the process.

***Lord God, as we live each day, empower us to live it for you and your glory. May our witness to your love and forgiveness be worthy of that which you have already done on our behalf. Amen.***

**Friday, July 11**

***Micah 6:6-8***

*<sup>8</sup>and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice,  
and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?*

The words of this verse from the prophet Micah speak of the simplicity and joy of living one's life to God. God calls us not to do great and extraordinary deeds in the world on God's behalf, but rather to do ordinary things in ordinary ways that the world around us sees as extraordinary. We are invited to give ourselves totally to God and God's mission and as a result to live in the peacefulness of God's presence.

***Lord God, in spite of the chaos that surrounds us we welcome your presence and the peace that accompanies it. Guide us and empower us to be your servants in the world walking humbly with you through all things. Amen.***

**Saturday, July 12**

***Psalm 27:1-14***

*<sup>1</sup>The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?  
The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?  
<sup>14</sup>Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!*

This week I have shared with you some of my favorite scriptures and with that maybe a glimpse of my image of God and the faith that sustains me in life and in ministry. The 27<sup>th</sup> Psalm seems to sum it all up. God is the Alpha and the Omega, the first word and the last. It is in God that I must place my trust in all matters and when I do that – what can befall me that God will not/can not handle.

My most difficult piece in this journey of faith and life is waiting for the Lord. If I have learned anything on the way it is that God's timing is very seldom the same as my timing. Yet wait on the Lord I must. It is the waiting and the trusting that fosters growth in faith and understanding of who God is in my life. And so we wait, together, as community of faith and the body of Christ, trusting that God has something else in mind that will be new and exciting. God's peace be with you all.

***Lord God we wait for you and trust you as light, hope, stronghold and salvation. Grant us the wisdom to see your work in the world around us and the excitement to participate in that work in whatever way that you call us. Amen.***