

**Devotions – June 6-12, 2021**

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**Sunday, June 6, 2021**

Text: Luke 4:16-21

**“When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.’ And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, ‘Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.’”**

Jesus was saying that in him, in their hearing of God’s Word, this Scripture was fulfilled today. Jesus is announcing who he is and what he is going to do. Yes, Jesus had a mission, and it was revealed to us in our listening and hearing, through scripture.

My love for scripture did not happen in a bolt of lightning experience. I’ve never actually had a bolt of lightning experience. Revelations for me come a little at a time, over time. I have a Catholic background, and as a Catholic, I didn’t read my Bible very much. Becoming Lutheran didn’t seem to make too much difference either.

I guess old habits die hard. But then I took on the job of church secretary. Each week while putting together the bulletins I would come across the texts for that Sunday. I guess this exposure stirred something in me which I didn’t know at the time, and for some strange reason I found myself driving back and forth to Gladstone, MI once a week, in all kinds of terrible weather for two years, attending Lay School for Mission. You see, scripture was speaking to me, not in words really but in this desire, this passion for scripture. I knew I had to learn more.

And oh, I did, the stories, the history, of my faith. Getting to know this God, my God through scripture. Building a personal relationship with God, through his Word. God speaks to us through his Word. We just have to listen.

Let us pray...

*Heavenly Father, we thank you for the men and women throughout the ages that have heard your voice, who have seen your vision, and who have experienced your physical presence through Jesus Christ. We thank you, Lord, that these faithful people were your instrument in recording, for future generations, your love and your grace through the scriptures. Amen.*



**Monday, June 7, 2021**

Text: Romans 8:26-27

**“In the same way the Spirit also comes to help us, weak as we are. For we do not know how we ought to pray; the Spirit himself pleads with God for us in groans that words cannot express. And God, who sees into our hearts, knows that the Spirit pleads with God on behalf of his people and in accordance with his will.”**

My Mom’s best friend was my Aunt Gail; she was my dad’s sister. Those two were inseparable. They were in the same social groups; they played golf together; of course, there were the family functions; they were always together, laughing, playing, and talking. They helped each other through raising kids, career changes, and financial difficulties. They were much more than family - they were best friends.

Eight months after my mom’s 50<sup>th</sup> birthday, she died of a massive heart attack. I was 30 years old at the time and the shock and pain I felt was overwhelming. I remember sitting on the couch at my parent’s house the day after her death, numb and emotionless as dozens of people milled around asking if there was anything they could do for me. Then my Aunt Gail walked in. She sat down next to me and without saying a word, she put her arms around me and started to cry. We sat there for a very long time, holding each other and sobbing. In her arms, in our mutual pain over the loss of a mother and friend, I felt deep love and compassion. I felt the presence of God. And I knew the compassion of Jesus. The Holy Spirit intercedes on my behalf and God gave to me exactly what I need at that moment.

Let us pray...

*Almighty God, when our pain is too great, when we don’t know what to pray or how to pray, your Holy Spirit is our intercessor. We thank you Lord that you hear our prayers, that you answer our prayers and that you are always with us. Amen.*



**Tuesday, June 8, 2021**

Text: Luke 7:6-7

**“And Jesus went with them, but when he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to say to him, ‘Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; therefore, I did not presume to come to you. But only speak the word, and let my servant be healed.’”**

This text brought back memories of my childhood in the Catholic Church. I made my First Communion at the age of 7 and from that time on Holy Communion has been a very important part of my worship experience. I was very young - 8 or 9 years old - when our family would come home from church and the first thing my siblings and I would do is set up an altar made from a cardboard box and drape it with a big bath towel. We would set up some chairs for the congregation and we would play Mass. I was always the Priest of course; after all I was the oldest. And I was also the only one that could recite the Mass by memory. You know it never occurred to me that a Priest had to be a man. After all, I was a natural. One of my brothers would be the altar boy, and the others would be the congregation. Mom always gave us a slice of bread and grape Kool-Aid so we could “pretend to have communion”. I do remember this text particularly because this was the call to Holy Communion. The Priest would say, “This is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Happy are those who are called to his supper,” and the congregation would reply, “Lord, I am not worthy to receive you, but only say the word, and I shall be healed.”

In this response, we proclaimed before God and one another that we were truly unworthy of this intimate union with Christ, *but of course who is?* We then also accepted in faith that Jesus would respond to us just as he did to the centurion with love and compassion, accepting us sinners, just as we are.

Let us pray...

*Holy Redeemer, we know that we will never be worthy of your love and of your grace this side of the Kingdom. We all fall short, all the time. We thank you, Lord, that although we are sinners, Jesus Christ makes us saints through the cross. Amen.*



**Wednesday, June 9**

Text: John 11:32-35

**When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus saw her**

**weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus began to weep.**

Jesus WEPT! I can weep at the drop of a hat. Any little thing can set me off, a song, a commercial, especially a baptism. You know how cleansing a good cry can be. I think it does us good to cry once and awhile. I'm sure that Jesus wept other times; at least I hope he did, but this is the only instance in the Bible where Jesus wept. This time, when Lazarus died, this time it was written down. He must have had great love for this man. It's a very human thing to do, showing us that Jesus is truly human and at the same time truly divine, as he raises Lazarus from the dead. And God shows us his love for all of his creation in giving to us his only Son to die so that we could be made worthy of God's grace through the Son.

Let us pray...

*Heavenly Father, we thank you for coming down to us in Jesus. We thank you for his humanness as well as his divineness. Please keep us mindful of Jesus' life that we may, in our humanness, imitate his divineness. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*



**Thursday, June 10, 2021**

Text: Luke 13:34

**Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!**

When I was a young girl, my family would all pile in the car on a Saturday morning and take a ride to my uncle's farm. The farm was the greatest place on earth. Not only was it great fun to have my cousins to play with, but they had all those wonderful animals! Cows, chickens, rabbits, pigs, horses, cats; all we had at home was a dog so to me this was heaven! The chickens on the farm were one of my favorites. They were so much fun to watch. I even raised chickens myself a few years ago. In the spring and summer months the hens on my uncle's farm would hatch out their chicks. They are so cute, so small, and so vulnerable. I just loved to watch them run around on those little legs, and to pick them up and cuddle them. I know first-hand though, that mother hens are very protective of their chicks. If the mother hen felt any sense of danger, from me or anything else she would cluck and squawk. Her wings would be flapping - it's pretty scary!!! Those chicks would instinctively run to, and gather around the mother hen, hiding in the protection of outstretched wings, safe and warm as she stood strong and vigilant, taking on the full force of the weather or predator or ME, instinctively defending her chicks. But, of course, a

few would wander from the protection of the mother hen, curious to see what all the fuss was about or just feeling independent and bold, and she would have to gather them up once again into her loving and safe embrace.

Sometimes we doubt God's love, and we doubt his forgiveness. We get angry when we cannot feel God's presence, when we can't feel him near us. *But even though we sometimes doubt and often turn away from God's desire to protect and save us, our God is a persistent God, and continues to lovingly gather us in.*

Let us pray...

*Loving God, we know that you are always near. Help us to feel your presence in our time of need. Lord, when we do stray from you, we know that we have your promise that you will gather us up into your protective presence once more; for this we humbly praise you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*



**Friday, June 11, 2021**

Text Matthew 6:25-34

**“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. “So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today.”**

As a newly hired church secretary for a newly ordained pastor starting his first call, I was feeling a lot of stress at my job. My pastor saw that I was struggling and worrying excessively over very small things. He suggested reading Matthew 6:25-34 to see what God's Word had to say about worry.

I go back to this passage often, knowing that God knows what I need and that he will provide me with those needs. This goes beyond what I will wear or eat. It goes to the comfort of knowing that he will provide the skills, people, and time for me to get through stressful areas of my life. With God at my side, I have no need for worry.

Let us pray...

*Heavenly Father, your many blessings are all around us. Help us to put all our faith in you in our everyday lives and know that you will provide for us all of our needs. We pray this in Jesus' holy name. Amen.*



**Saturday, June 12, 2021**

Text: Luke 3:21-22

**Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."**

On April 10<sup>th</sup>, 1959, seven days after my birth, I was baptized at Precious Blood Catholic Church. In the presence of God, our priest, my mom and dad, my grandparents, friends, relatives, and my sponsors, I became a child of God, inheriting God's promise of forgiveness of sins, and eternal life. I must have cried when I was baptized, because I have cried at every baptism I have witnessed since. I've witnessed and sponsored nieces and nephews and their children, children of friends, congregation members, and of course my own grandchildren.

But there is nothing quite like the baptism of your own children, the water pouring down their tiny face and those life-giving words, "I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Those words that take this ordinary water and make it a God thing, that make it not an act of ours but an act of God, washing this child clean, free from sin, taking this child, my child, as his own. I have cried at the baptisms of all three of my children.

Those tears, those wonderful tears, are tears of joy, and they are a sign for me that there is something miraculous going on here. God is at work through the very action of the Sacrament of Baptism, coming down to us, where we are. God is doing something life changing through this water, this sign, and his word and we have faith and believe that the Holy Spirit is present in the sacrament and in this recipient of baptism, instilling in them faith that will be nurtured and grow.

Let us pray...

*We thank you, Lord, for this wonderful gift of baptism and for making us your children. Through the Holy Spirit's work in us, keep us steadfast in faith and nurture us to be the faithful people you want us to be. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

