

Devotions

Devotions – July 18 - 24, 2021
By Michael Holman, LLM
Bethany Lutheran Church, Negaunee, MI
Emanuel Lutheran Church, Skandia, MI

Sunday July 18, 2021

Text: Micah 2:1-13

“I will surely gather all of you, O Jacob, I will gather the survivors of Israel; I will set them together like sheep in a fold, like a flock in its pasture; it will resound with people.” (vs. 12)

One of the positives that occurred to me during our time of isolation during this pandemic was the amount of time that I had for reflection. Time to explore whether people of power or wealth might take advantage of others or not. A time to reflect about privilege and who authorizes it.

The prophet tells us of just such actions. The greedy take from the poor, including their ability to care for each other, and that they also will be subject to such takings. This passage is not all doom and gloom though, as the closing verses tell us of the Lord’s faithfulness, that the Lord will gather all and save them.

Let us pray: *Good and gracious God, you gather us into your tender care, making us whole once again. May we be so transformed by your love that our labor would bring others wholeness and healing. Amen*



Monday July 19, 2021

Text: Jeremiah 18:1-6

“Just like the clay in the potter’s hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel.” (vs. 6)

As a youngster I had the opportunity to have art class in school. A favorite study was working with clay. We were only allowed to work the clay by hand, so most objects were made by rolling out coils then assembling them into the shape of a bowl or cup. The coils then were smoothed out by scraping the coils together or wetting your fingers and rubbing the coils to fill in the gaps. My aunt had a better way though, she had a potter’s wheel. A lump of clay spinning on this wheel could be shaped by cupping your hands around it then pushing your fingers down the center opening up the vessel as you also shaped it taller, not an easy thing to do as many times the pot would crumple together forcing you to start over.

Perhaps that is the way of our life in Christ. God forms and shapes us but sometimes we collapse under the weight of this world we live in. The good news is that our Creator never gives up on us, restoring us to new life.

Let us pray: *Beautiful Creator God, when the things of this world drag us down, we trust that you are there to lift us up, building a new and wonderful life in you. Amen*



Tuesday July 20, 2021

Text: Psalm 61

“Hear my cry, O God; listen to my prayer.” (vs. 1a)

How often do you start prayer like this? My simple answer to this would be many. When my heart is troubled, when things seem to be at their worst, that is how I cry out: hear me. The psalmist doesn't leave it at a simple plea to listen to his prayer, though, as would be a good practice for all of us to follow. The call for help continues with words of praise and thanksgiving bringing to the forefront that which is most important, that our strength and refuge are in the Lord God Almighty.

Let us pray: *Protector God, you alone are our rock and refuge. Your steadfast love and faithfulness shall carry us all the days of our lives. Amen*



Wednesday July 21, 2021

ELW #608 - *Softly and Tenderly Jesus is Calling*

“Come home, come home!” (Refrain)

This is perhaps one of the most well-known hymns published in the Evangelical Lutheran Worship hymnal. Many hear the lyrics and think of our Lord calling us to our heavenly home. A closer listening reminds us of much more. Softly, tenderly Jesus calls to everyone. We are assured that He watches over us, that He offers us mercy, and that pardon for our transgressions is waiting for all. There might be times when it seems that the line has been crossed, that some things are unforgivable, yet Jesus still calls to us *Come Home*.

Let us pray: *Forgiving God, your mercy is way beyond our understanding so we listen for your call. We find rest and peace as you pour out your love upon us when we turn to you, giving you our thanks and praise. Amen*



Thursday July 22, 2021

Text: Psalm 73:23-28

“My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.” (vs. 26)

I know that I have suggested to read only verses 23-28 of this Psalm, but it might serve me better to read the entire psalm. There is much to be gleaned there. So often in today’s world we are presented a score card used to rate one’s popularity or prominence. Quite often that card is a list of “how much” do you have. Things like wealth, power, status within the community seem to be the highest vote getters. Faith enters the equation also, as some of the most successful by the world’s standards have very little or none of that, relying on their own wit. The confession at the end of this psalm is what inspires me. I agree with the psalmist that “it is good for me to be near God.” With confidence I agree with the writer that God is my strength.

Let us pray: *Everlasting God, all that I need your hand has provided. While the things of this world change all the time, you remain with us continually, holding us up and guiding us into your tender care. May we boldly proclaim that your grace is sufficient to sustain life. Amen*



Friday July 23, 2021

Text: Isaiah 58:1-9

“Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly” (vs.8)

I have to ask myself from time to time if what I am doing is for the right reason. You know, when you do something is it for my sake or the sake of the other? Are there times when we do something that we think is for the benefit of someone or something else, when all it is really doing is feeding our ego maybe? It is difficult to stay on task, to walk the walk as well as talk the talk, but when that happens, we certainly see the healing and wholeness that the Lord gives to us, being made new once again.

Let us pray: *God of our salvation, you show us goodness and mercy, kindness and justice. Light our path that we walk in your ways sharing the life you have given us with all the world, that all will know your peace. Amen*



Saturday July 24, 2021

Text: Titus 3:1-8

“he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy...” (vs. 5)

The manner in which this book ends I find quite useful. I am especially drawn to the notion that at one time I also was foolish, disobedient, led astray etc. etc. But then comes the great hope. The goodness and kindness of God our Savior appeared. Saved through the waters of baptism and renewed by the Holy Spirit. By Grace we have been saved. This is the fantastic gift we have received - Life!

Let us pray: *Almighty God, we give you our thanks and praise and offer the life that you have given us to serve you and your creation. With shouts of thanksgiving we honor you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen*

