

Daily Devotions

June 19-25, 2022

By Roland Jacobson

Christ the King Lutheran Church, Escanaba, Michigan

INTRODUCTION

During this past year I have been using a daily devotional called *The President's Devotional* written by Joshua Dubois. Mr. Dubois was the Director of the Office of Faith Based and Neighborhood Partnerships located within the executive office of President Obama. Each day, Mr. Dubois would send a word of scripture, accompanied with a message, to the President and the book includes a yearly compilation of some of those messages. I have really enjoyed this devotional and will use a week of the devotionals as a guide for my thoughts in preparing my comments.

Sunday, June 19, 2022

Text: Luke 4:8 (NIV)

Jesus answered, "It is written: Worship the Lord your God and serve him only."

Without a doubt, the scripture for this Sunday is very appropriate for the day. Sunday is certainly the big day for worship within our congregations. I know that I treasure the worship service each Sunday and also enjoy participating and helping with the services. I know that it is true in our congregation, and it is probably true for many of the congregations within the synod, that the attendance at services is at an all-time low. I find myself looking around during the service to see who is attending and frequently become concerned about the low numbers. But I have to remind myself to refocus my thoughts and concerns to the true purpose of worship which is to worship my Lord and my God. I need my mind to be focused and captured on the right things and then I will receive the direction and strength to live out my obligations within his Kingdom.

Prayer: *Open my heart and my mind to the Holy Spirit so that I can be directed to serve and worship my Lord and God. Amen*

Monday, June 20, 2022

Text: Luke 9:49-50 (NKJV)

Now John answered and said, "Master, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow with us." But Jesus said to him, "Do not forbid him, for he who is not against us is on our side."

Wouldn't it be nice if everyone believed like me, worshiped like me, voted like me, supported my synod like me and the list could go on? No – it wouldn't be nice: in fact, it would be boring and result in me missing out on hearing and learning actions and messages that can be more

powerful than anything I could devise or consider. Jesus repeatedly taught us to be open to others – just think of the parable of the Good Samaritan for one example. The journey for each of us can be very different and it is a never-ending process of learning from others. We humans are so quick to notice the differences of others and not tune in to the many similarities – we really do have so much more in common so let's build on that. Help me to realize that I am not in control and to remember the lessons of acceptance and openness displayed by Jesus.

Prayer: Dear God, help me to remember that there are many co-laborers in the kingdom and my prayer is that they all flourish. Remind me to “not forbid” them. Amen

Tuesday, June 21, 2022

Text: John 3:16 (NIV)

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Certainly, this passage from scripture is very familiar. It falls into the category such as the Lord's Prayer or the 23rd Psalm. Passages that are so familiar to us that, sometimes, I fear that saying them becomes rote and we say the words but forget the deep meaning.

One word stands out in power in this passage and, of course, that word is LOVE. Love is the supreme gift we receive from our Redeemer. We receive his love in so many ways in our daily lives – love of spouse, love of children, love of fellow Christian friends, or love from our neighbors. But, of course, the most wonderful gift of love was the gift of Jesus. Help me to remember to receive this passage with awe due to this ultimate gift of his LOVE.

Prayer: God, I know that I can never love you like you love me. Help me to receive the power of your love and help me to display your love in this troubled world. Amen

Wednesday, June 22, 2022

Text: 1 Thessalonians 5:18 (ESV)

Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

How powerful, would you say, is the power of a sincere thank you? It makes no difference if you give it or if you receive it. I would say that a sincere thank you is probably one of the most powerful forces in our lives. Just think about it – how long could you go without receiving any kind of thanks or recognition for what you have done? I am sure that you would quickly become discouraged and probably give up what you are doing. Unfortunately, I am afraid that we frequently forget to give a sincere thank you, but we do not so easily forget to give out a

criticism, or a put down, on someone. It seems that we are more likely to criticize than we are to thank. Jesus shows us another way. Jesus demonstrated his love and his thanks throughout his ministry, and we are challenged to continue to follow the lead of Jesus in extending thanks. So, today, I challenge you to surprise someone with a sincere thank you for what they do that make this world a better place.

Prayer: Dear God, help me to remember all of the things that I have for which I should be thankful and to remember to thank you for my many gifts. Also, give me many opportunities to extend thanks to those around me – it just may make their day brighter. Amen

Thursday, June 23, 2022

Text: Ephesians 4:16 (Good News Bible)

Under His control, all the different parts of the body fit together, and the whole body is held together by every joint with which it is provided.

Our body is indeed a wonderful design of many parts that work together in harmony. And we know that it is a gift from God and should be treated like a temple with care and love.

Unfortunately, we frequently neglect our bodies and then we often bear the consequences of illness, discomfort, and loss of movement. In the same manner, our church is a design of many parts that needs to work in union in order for it to function at the highest outcome. We are presently facing extreme challenges to our church and just like our body it can be resistant to change. Many of the parts no longer seem to function like they used to – for instance the confirmation program, or the potlucks, or the Bible studies and the list could go on, all seem to be struggling and may not survive. I mourn the past and miss the church body that I grew up in and know and love – I don't want it to change! But, just as our bodies change as we grow and age, so the church must change to adapt with the present. Hang on, and hold on tight to Jesus, as we weather the upcoming changes. Remember, the one thing that never changes is the love of Jesus.

Prayer: Our churches need our support and love more than ever. Help me to respond to the many challenges that our churches now face and use my energy to guide the church. Remember that Jesus will guide, and we need to be open to his word and love. Amen

Friday, June 24, 2022

Text: Psalm 125:1 (ESV)

Those who trust in the Lord are like Mt. Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever.

I once had the opportunity to drive up to the top of Pike's Peak in Colorado. Actually, I was riding in the car as someone else did the driving so it allowed me to really enjoy the view which was amazing. But I have to admit as I looked out – or I should say when I looked down – I did find myself feeling a little scared as the road was very close to the edge. When we reached the top, the weather turned into a blizzard, so I really did not get to see the scene from on top. Overall, I was very impressed with the overall majesty of the mountain and plan to go back again when, hopefully, the weather is more cooperative.

God's word should give us the same feeling of majesty and power. Following his word does take us on many journeys that can seem scary. At times we will run into blizzards where it is hard to know where we should go or how to survive the storm. During those times, it becomes important that we keep our focus on our Lord for he is like Mt. Zion, or Pike's Peak, whose love and guidance abides forever.

Prayer: *We know that as we travel through life that we will face many trials, temptations, and losses. Help us to turn to you for support as we know that your presence in our lives is like a mountain that we can always turn to remember your majesty and power. Amen*

Saturday, June 25, 2022

Text: Ephesians 4:15 (Good News Bible)

Instead, by speaking the truth in a spirit of love, we must grow up in every way to Christ who is the head.

When I consider this passage, I quickly come to two questions that should be considered and answered. The first question is the obvious one – what is the truth? I was really faced with this question when members of my congregation determined that the ELCA was no longer speaking the truth and a number of these members dropped their membership at Christ the King and worked to form a new church. The second question is how do you speak the truth in a spirit of love when there is so much anxiety and anger on both sides of the issue? I don't even pretend to know the answers to these questions. What I do know is that Jesus would have us follow his guidance of responding with love even when we are disappointed, sad, scared, and even angry. Not easy, for sure, but we all know that love will win out in the end.

Prayer: *Dear God, guide me to the truth. And, as you guide me give me the power of love as I maneuver in this difficult, but wonderful, world. Amen*
