

# Daily Devotions

July 3 - 9, 2022

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## Sunday, July 3, 2022

Text: Galatians 6:14

**“May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”**

When I was growing up, I was told that boasting is always bad. It certainly can trip us up. It's easy to boast of a successful career, skill at a hobby, even national pride (especially on this weekend). Yet Paul encourages us to boast of the cross. The cross is not exactly like those other things that are easy to boast about. See, all those things – career, hobby, country – those are all ways of boasting about how great *we* are. They're about proclaiming how much *we* have things together, under control, figured out. The cross? Jesus' death on the cross was necessary precisely because we don't have it together. Boasting in the cross is boasting that I do not have life under control; I don't even have my own sinfulness under control. Boasting in the cross is boasting that I need God. It's humbling. It's scary. It puts the focus back on God, on God's actions, on God's love for the world. What would it look like for you, on this weekend of all weekends, to boast only in the cross of Christ?

Let's pray: *Jesus, help us to boast only in your cross, that we might set our focus squarely on you at all times. We love you. Amen.*

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## Monday, July 4, 2022

Text: Colossians 1:13-14

**“[The Father] has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”**

It's always interesting to read about the Kingdom of Christ, but especially so on a day when so many of us are celebrating an earthly nation. It's a day when we are often celebrating our nation's history, where we have come from, and celebrating the nation that we long to be. Yet we are reminded that this nation we celebrate today is not all there is. We are reminded that we have another citizenship: a citizenship in the Kingdom of Christ, and it is *that* kingdom that offers us redemption and forgiveness. What would it mean to celebrate that dual citizenship and to see that redemption and forgiveness for the world that God loves today?

Let's pray: *Creator God, help us to recognize your Kingdom come and to live in your way of peace and justice. We love you. Amen.*

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**Tuesday, July 5, 2022**

Text: Colossians 1:9

**“For this reason, since the day we heard it, we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God’s will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding...”**

This is a part of the opening of this letter to the Colossians. In this letter, we will find warnings about false teachings, exhortations about the need to remain faithful to God and God’s Word. Yet we begin with a simple statement of love. “We have not ceased praying for you.” Have you ever felt that kind of unceasing prayer? Or have you ever prayed that kind of unceasing prayer for someone else? Have you ever prayed like that for a stranger or an enemy? That kind of prayer changes us. When we are the one praying, we find a sort of love that bubbles up, even when we are praying for someone we consider an enemy. We humans cannot earnestly pray for someone without coming to see them as a child whom God dearly loves as much as God loves us. When others are praying for us, that expression of love can soften our hearts and fill us with peace and love. What would it take for you to pray unceasingly for a stranger this week?

Let's pray: *Holy Spirit, move us to prayer in all times, as an act of loving and trusting in your faithfulness. We love you. Amen.*

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**Wednesday, July 6, 2022**

Text: Deuteronomy 30:11

**“Surely, this commandment that I am commanding you today is not too hard for you, nor is it too far away.”**

As Lutherans, we often find ourselves pitting the Law and the Gospel against each other. “The Law is bad because it tries to control us, and the Gospel sets us free from the Law.” Here we see a different perspective that can help us to hold Law and Gospel, the two words from God, more faithfully. Here we see an affirmation of the Law. Surely, it’s not too hard, nor is it far away. Surely, it’s not a horrible burden. Surely, this is a gift from God. The Law gives us a peek into God’s heart. It shows us what God values: our relationship with God and our neighbors, our relationship with rest and work, our relationship with the world God loves. Of course, that isn’t to say that following the Law, our actions, have any power to save us. But in following God’s Law, in listening to that value of love for all of God’s creation, we move closer to proclaiming

the God whose love changes and recreates the world. We move closer to God's vision of wholeness for all. What would it mean for you to live that proclamation?

Let's pray: *Loving God, help us to trust in your words, to live your way, to proclaim your goodness. We love you. Amen.*

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## **Thursday, July 7, 2022**

Text: Deuteronomy 30:14

**“No, the word is very near to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart for you to observe.”**

Many things in our lives have changed since March, 2020, but one of them that I have noticed is in how we relate to God. Right away, many of us realized that we had become dependent on the church for 100% of our faith life. Our faith was for Sunday morning (or whenever our community gathered for worship), but not for the other 167 hours of the week. Now, I'm not saying that the communal worship is bad. Not at all. But it should propel us out into a life of faith all week long. It should propel us into a life of love and service. It should propel us into this kind of observance, with the word being “in our mouths and hearts” at all times. And in that week of faith, we are then propelled back to the community to share what God has been up to. What would it look like for you to have the word of God in your mouth this whole week?

Let's pray: *Spirit of love, keep your word within us all the time, so that we can live lives of faithfulness and love. We love you. Amen.*

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## **Friday, July 8, 2022**

Text: Psalm 25:10

**“To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.”**

This was a favorite camp song of mine when I was a camper. It was high energy, joyful, and celebratory. It's sometimes hard for us to remember to stop and give praise to God for all that God is and has done. This Psalm, in the tune of that song, reminds me to do so. As the song and the psalm go on, this joy doesn't come from having an easy life, or from getting what we wanted. Rather, the joy comes from the trustworthiness of God. The joy comes from being able to trust in where God leads us, in being able to trust God with our confession, in trusting God is our salvation all the day long. What would it mean for you to trust God all the day long?

Let's pray: *Trustworthy God, help us to lift our lives before you, to trust you with all that we are. We love you. Amen.*

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**Saturday, July 9, 2022**

Text: Psalm 25:5

**“Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; in you have I trusted all the day long.”**

How many of us remember our time in school as the best time of our lives? Certainly, some of us do, but, for many of us, that period of intensive learning was a time of stress. It leads into us sometimes seeing learning as a weakness. Like we should have already *known*, and having more to learn is weakness. Yet our psalmist admits freely that they have more to learn. “Teach me, God.” To me, the psalmist almost seems desperate to learn from God. So maybe learning, and having more to learn, is not weakness, but part of what it looks like to trust God. We do not see the end of the road; we do not know where God is leading us, or what the world will look like as God creates all things new. But we can rely on God always. We can trust in the God of our salvation. And we can always learn more about what it means to live as God’s people. What would you like God to teach you?

Let’s pray: *God of our salvation, lead us in your truth and teach us what it means to live as your people. We love you. Amen.*

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