



a people
after

**God's
OWN
Heart**

**2018 Lenten
Devotionals**

BOOK TWO

WRITTEN BY THE PEOPLE OF
HEBRON LUTHERAN CHURCH

Day 20 – March 8, 2018
“God Is My Teacher”

“You desire truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.” (Psalm 51:6 NRSV)

Each of us has a “secret heart” known only to God. As persons created by a transcendent, personal God in God’s very image and likeness of God, we, like God, are way too deep for us to know one another—or even ourselves—perfectly, the way God knows us, from (deep) inside out.

God looks on the heart. God’s Word calls David “a man *after* my own heart.” What endeared David to God was not that David was perfect or always obedient to God. After all, David committed adultery, lied, and even murdered the husband he had wronged, in an attempt to cover up his wrongdoing. So are we all—all capable of more evil than we could ever imagine. As a grade-schooler I and several buddies nearly burned down Poplar Halls Elementary School in Norfolk, Virginia. I fled to the safety of home after the brush fire got out of our control and stood beside my mom and dad in our back yard as fire engine after fire engine roared past, sirens blaring and lights flashing; and they stared at the column of smoke rising and wondered, “What’s going on at the school?” I was silent out of fear and faithlessness, afraid of their wrath and rejection. Many years later I apologized to my dad once when we were alone for having humiliated him by such a stunt; for I had never done so, as I felt I should. He stared at me silently and then said simply, “I don’t remember that at all.” That’s God’s heart for you in Christ: forgiveness so real and full the sin is forgotten forever...all because of Jesus Christ, crucified for me.

As a person *after* God’s own heart, David turned back to God, confessed his wrongdoing and received God’s grace anew to *keep loving and seeking God as his teacher, so he could gain wisdom to live a godly life that pleases God*. The result is Psalm 51! Over 2,500 years later God--through David and Psalm 51--is still teaching us about God’s limitless and endless love for us, and also teaching us how to live as grace-filled people after God’s own heart, seeking God every day. We stumble, fall, turn to God; and God lifts us upright again and journeys with us.

Prayer

Holy Spirit, make me long and strive to be a person after God’s own heart, just like David. Be my teacher, as You were his. Form in me the heart of Jesus so my every word and deed will flow from a heart of grace for everyone around me, just as all Your words and works do for me. Amen.

Written by Pr. Dave Shockey

Day 21 - March 9, 2018
“God Gives Me Grace”

“The Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love.” (Psalm 145:8)

As a Speech Pathologist, during my years of working with students who had language deficits, I witnessed, firsthand, just how difficult it was for my students to **grasp the meaning** of homographs - words that have multiple meanings. One example of a homograph is the word “**grace.**” A few of the words used to explain the meaning of “**grace**” include elegance, a pleasing quality, a mealtime prayer, favor, mercy, and forgiveness. **Grace** can even be used as a person’s name. See how confusing it can be?

As a Christian, it can likewise be difficult for me, at times, to **grasp the meaning** of the **grace** that God offers to me at all times. Two meanings of that type of **grace**, as defined in Dictionary.com are 1) the freely given, unmerited favor and love of God, and 2) the influence or spirit of God operating in humans to regenerate or strengthen them.

I don’t know about you, but this beautiful, undeserved, free gift of love, forgiveness, strength, and mercy that God offers to us 24/7, as spiritually mindboggling as it can be, from a human perspective, is the only reason I’m able to navigate the rough waters that life on Earth can present. **God’s grace** is my strength, hope, assurance, guidance, and reason to start each day with a fresh perspective and attitude. To have the assurance, through my faith that God loves and forgives me, in spite of my sinful self, is the only reason I’m still standing. However, it doesn’t stop there. God doesn’t want us to keep that gift of **grace** to ourselves. The **grace** He freely and lovingly offers to us needs to be passed on to others, even those we don’t want to share it with; you know, those who don’t always show us love and **grace**. Trust me, I know, firsthand, how difficult that can be. I’ve even struggled to share **grace** with my own family, especially in the last few years, as we’ve navigated some very rough waters. However, does God hold His **grace** from us when we are less than desirable? God never has, and He never will. **Now, that’s grace!**

Prayer

Most gracious and loving Father, I will never be able to thank You enough for the unending love and **grace** You offer to me at all times. I ask for forgiveness when I fail in being “slow to anger and rich in love,” as You always are. I pray, Lord God, that You help me to accept Your gift of **grace**, and then to humbly pass it on to all who need it. You are my light and strength. Help me to be that light for others. In Jesus name. Amen.

Written by Anita Bernardo



Day 22 – March 10, 2018
“God Gives Me Forgiveness”

“For Your name’s sake, O Lord, pardon my guilt, for it is great.”
(Psalm 25:11 ESV)

We need forgiveness. No matter how far along as disciples we are, you and I need forgiveness. How many times have you told someone you’re sorry? Quite a few I would guess, if you’re like me. We know we have failed and sinned. We often beat ourselves up over past mistakes and wrongs committed, sometimes ones that occurred yesterday; but often they are ones that are years past. Failed relationships, harsh words spoken in anger, failure to extend help when help was needed, the list goes on and on. Sometimes it ends with a quick phrase of “I’m sorry,” or we think we can make it up by a good or virtuous deed; but other times the list plays over and over in our head in a torturous loop, telling us we will never be good enough and that our virtues are worthless. The worst part is that dreadful loop is correct. Our virtues are rags; and we will never be good enough, because the standard by which we are judged is the very righteousness of God.

So what do we do? What can we offer the God of the universe for our sins? Nothing; for as Martin Luther’s last written words were, “We are beggars! This is true.” The good news is that God **gives** forgiveness. He gave it to David, and he gives it to us! We can’t earn it or deserve it, for we are beggars; we can only ask and accept God’s forgiveness. Not only does He give us forgiveness, He will “make His ways known to us, teach us in His paths, and guide us in His salvation,” as David states in Psalm 25. While our guilt is great, He pardons us and shows us the way.

So read Psalm 25:11 again; then read Psalm 25 in its entirety. Ponder on God’s ways and where we have departed from them, but don’t stop there. Ask for and accept God’s forgiveness, for He will provide it freely.

Prayer

Merciful Father, help us to ask, like David, for your forgiveness; and help us to remember that we are forgiven, and guide us to learn and walk in Your ways. Amen.

Written by Larry Mabry



Day 23 - Monday, March 12, 2018

“God Gives Me Mercy”

“Praise be to the Lord, for he has heard my cry for mercy.” (Psalm 28:6)

When I realized that this devotional was going to be about mercy, I stopped to think, “What does mercy really mean?” After a quick Google search, the definition appeared: “mercy—compassion or forgiveness shown toward someone whom it is within one’s power to punish or harm.”

So just like David in this psalm, God is ready and waiting to hear our cry for mercy.

I was reminded of the words from this hymn, “Great is thy Faithfulness! Morning by morning new mercies I see”—new mercy for us is available every day—to cover my sin, to forgive me when I am quick to be jealous, worried, anxious...and when I am not showing mercy to someone who has hurt me; that never happens with God...He is filled with compassion for us!

We see mercy mentioned again by the apostle Paul in the New Testament when God gave us the greatest gift of all, his son Jesus: “God, being rich in mercy...even when we were dead through our sins, made us alive together with Christ.” (Ephesians 2:4)

In these troubling times, we could have much more peace and joy in our lives if all people could reflect on mercy mentioned in the shortest psalm, Psalm 117: “All ye nations praise the Lord, on account of his merciful kindness.”

Friends, I don’t know where I’d be without my Savior and His great mercy. It has been a very tough few years for our family, and I cry out for His mercy daily. I take heart in the next verse of Psalm 28 as well: “The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to him in song.”

Prayer

Father God, thank You for Your mercy toward me. I rejoice that You are my strength and my shield in this tough world. Amen.

Written by Roben Dixon



Day 24 – March 13, 2018
“God Gives Me Kindness”

“He gives his king great victories; he shows unfailing love to his anointed, to David and to his descendants forever.” (Psalm 18:50)

At first glance, this Psalm doesn't seem to denote kindness at all. This is especially true if you only focus on the proclamation of victories. On second glance, the focus should be on the words ‘unfailing’ and ‘forever.’ That is where true mercy and kindness prevail.

Working with computers and machinery, in general, for as long as I have or really for any period of time, you begin to learn the word “should” on a different level. Whereas earlier in my career, after I fixed an issue on a car or computer, I would tell the customer, “It’s fixed!” I have come to the realization that machines have a funny way of failing in unexpected ways. Therefore, my assured proclamation of “It’s fixed” has changed to “This should work”.

What does it truly mean if something is “unfailing”? It means, with no ambiguity, that you can trust it without reserve. It means that it always has worked, is currently working, and will work indefinitely. Oh, that the computers I work on were unfailing!

But this is God’s love for us: unfailing. We have seen it through the generations throughout Scripture and the church. We encounter it today through acts of mercy and sacrificial love. We embrace a promise of this love that flows without ceasing. How then do we respond? With a tender love that is traditionally known as loving-kindness. These are actions (kindnesses) that are influenced by love.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, fill us with Your unfailing love. Help us to see Your love through Scripture, to trust Your love through Your promises and to rely on Your love throughout the heights and depths of our journeys. And as we are transformed through Your love, let it manifest within us in acts of kindness and generosity towards others. Amen.

Written by Anthony Palm



Day 25 – March 14, 2018
“God Gives Me Righteousness”

“The LORD works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed.”
(Psalm 103:6)

What is righteousness? A churchy word for “doing the right stuff?” Or is it more?

However we choose to define righteousness, I have lacked it. We all have. That’s the point and underlying truth that requires Jesus in our lives; but even centuries prior to Jesus’ revelation and sacrifice for our sins, the Psalmist here still realizes that GOD is the worker of righteousness. If we have any shred of it, we can thank God.

Certainly, this is nothing new for Lutherans, but we often do not live as if God is the worker of our “good.” I’ve often had a hard time balancing “vocation” in the church. Along with a call to be a pastor, there are practical ways in which I must work hard to achieve goals, to make myself available for people, and to “do my homework,” if I am to grow and serve well in a congregation. On the flip side, I cannot do any of this without Christ. I cannot by my own effort achieve vocational salvation, spiritual salvation, or eternal salvation. The LORD works righteousness - not me.

What is the Good News here? That God is loving, willing, and available to transform your life and your neighbor’s life: the one oppressed by injustice and the one oppressed by a self-centric outlook. God gives us Righteousness – and the Key is Jesus Christ. Jesus is the lens through which our goodness exists.

Prayer

LORD, thank You for providing and working righteousness in us. Our only hope is You. We cannot do it ourselves, yet we realize that You call us to be righteous and to turn from our sins. Strengthen in us the desire to embrace Your calling on our lives – to be transformed into Your likeness and to take on the very righteousness of Christ. Amen.

Written by Pr. Andrew Potratz



Day 26 – March 15, 2018

"God Gives Me Peace"

“May the LORD give strength to his people! May the LORD bless his people with peace!” (Psalm 29:11 ESV)

Psalm 29 is a hymn of praise attributed to David and speaks of a thundering storm in terms of God’s rule over His people that enables peace. This psalm is divided into three E’s: **Exhortation**, **Excellence**, and **Exalting** of God. These attributes of God’s power and glory are described as a mighty storm moving from the Mediterranean inland over the forests of Lebanon.

Have you ever sat down on your deck and watched a thunderstorm as it rolls across the sky? The storm bringing flashes of brilliant light that closes your eyes, thundering booms that shake your soul, and periods of rain that refresh the air. In a thunderstorm you can sense both fear and beauty at the same time. I have very close friends who delight in watching and listening to a storm as it traverses the sky. There is no doubt that they can see a glimpse of God’s glory as they enjoy the show that His nature has put on display! As I reflected on this psalm, it became clear that many people I know are going through a difficult storm. It brings fear and trepidation as they attempt to weather the storms that have flooded their life. As a believer in Jesus Christ, we do not need to see storms as something we should fear. You see, God is in control over both the storms of nature and in your life. One of the greatest aspects of a thunderstorm is when it clears away during the day, and God erects a colorful rainbow in its place! The rainbow is not only a sign of God’s promise; it is a visual display of His peace. There is no greater peace than God’s peace, which is available to you and to me.

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, help me to develop a peace of mind that only comes from casting all my burdens upon You. Help me to take my eyes off the circumstances of life that seem so burdensome to me and to learn how to keep my eyes fixed upon Jesus. When storms of life abound, remind me that your rainbow is just around the corner, which is your perfect peace that only comes from You. Amen.

Written by Rick Kloos



Day 27 – March 16, 2018

“God Gives Me Joy”

“You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, that my heart may sing to you and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give you thanks forever.” (Psalm 30:11-12)

I understand why David wrote those beautiful words. When God makes a major change in your life, giving thanks to Him forever is the joyful and appropriate response.

Many years ago an acquaintance said to me, “Laura, you are the most negative person I have ever met.” I was stunned; I didn’t see myself that way at all. But over the years since that comment, I came to realize that many difficult life experiences had left me sorrowful, angry and unforgiving.

But God had another plan for me, a very positive one. Gradually, God worked a new spirit, His Spirit of love, into me. He forgave me for all the sins I had committed, and He continues to forgive me daily. His forgiving example helped me to forgive others and let go of past wrongs toward me. Both my mind and heart opened wide, and I was able to truly experience freedom and joy.

My wailing has, indeed, turned to dancing. I feel great joy when I am able to dance, but I feel a greater joy when I ‘dance’ internally to the praise and worship music of both the traditional and modern services. Hearing this music always makes me want to praise God for removing my sackcloth and giving me such great joy.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, how very grateful we are when we can turn our sorrows over to you, and you take our broken hearts and bring them healing and joy. May our hearts never be silent but always sing songs of praise and thanks to you for your everlasting love and care for us. Amen

Written by Laura Gardner



Day 28 – March 17, 2018

“God Gives Me Love”

“For great is your love, higher than the heavens; your faithfulness reaches to the skies” (Psalm 108:4)

Love is something we all need and want in our lives; it is the subject matter of countless poems and songs. King David, himself a poet, describes God’s love so eloquently in vs. 4.

God’s love truly is so much higher than our own human ability to love. When we can come to the point of feeling and accepting God’s love, we can be healed of wounds inflicted upon us by those whose ability to love was flawed. I have experienced that healing from my own childhood wounds. His love to me has been expressed through the words, actions and kindnesses of those who possess His heart of love. The apostle, Paul, describes Godly love so beautifully in 1Corinthians 13:4-8. “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.”

I know I don’t have the ability to love others this way without God’s flowing in me and through me. We need to receive God’s love in order for us to love others with His love. This love is the greatest of gifts. God’s love is non-judgmental; it doesn’t condemn us, but wants to save us and set us free from sin’s hold on our lives. His love is eternal and unchanging and transforming. This is truly the Good News!

Prayer

Loving Father, how grateful we are for the treasure that is Your love. May we always remember to pass that gift along to all those You place in our path each day. Amen.

Written by Laura Gardner



Day 29 – March 19, 2018

“God Gives Me Justice”

“I will sing of your love and justice; to you, Oh Lord, I will sing praise.” (Psalm 101:1)

One of my favorite Bible verses is Micah 6:8: “He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” God is just; He has been just to me, and he wants His children to be just. So what does that mean?

I used to think of justice solely in terms of punishment of wrongdoing or fairness. The Hebrew word, *mishap*, does mean that; but it also means more. Several years ago I used one of the “Year Through the Bible” reading plans; and a year or two after that, I did it again. The Lord used that time to teach me about His justice. So what else does justice mean besides fairness and bringing criminals to justice? In some contexts, it means taking up the care and cause of widows, orphans, “strangers in the land,” and those that have been wronged. In verse 5 of Psalm 101, David promises to destroy anyone who secretly slanders his neighbor. Another example of this is in Malachi 3:5 where God, through the prophet Malachi, is calling the leaders of Israel ‘adulterers’ for worshiping things instead of Himself, for swearing falsely, for oppressing the hired worker, the widow, the orphan and denying justice to the resident alien; He is rightly stating that in doing so, they do not fear the Lord.

At first glance you might say these horrible deeds have nothing to do with you; I know I used to believe that; but the Lord wouldn’t leave it at that. These verses became very salient when I started asking myself if my business practices oppressed or cheated those who work under me; have I promoted policies that make it hard for modern day widows and orphans to get by, or have my ears been deaf to their cries, have my hands been slothful to offer help?

Prayer

Almighty Father, teach us Your justice through Your Word; convict us and enable us to do justice and walk humbly with You through your Spirit. Amen.

Written by Larry Mabry



Day 30 – March 20, 2018
“God Gives Me Goodness”

“How abundant are the good things that you have stored up for those who fear you, that you bestow in the sight of all, on those who take refuge in you.” (Psalm 31:19)

It seems that God actually does have good in mind for us!

One of the most challenging things for a follower of Jesus is to believe that God is good in a world that is full of so much suffering and evil. The Psalmist certainly had his share of suffering, and yet still holds on to God’s goodness.

In one of the darker times of my life, I was resigned to living in depression – and I thought that God was good, but that my life just wasn’t going to be. Ever been there? When we have enough faith to believe, but not nearly enough heart to FEEL like God is good? Perhaps we can relate to one another... God has since shown me that life can be good – even when it doesn’t feel good. God’s consistent love and persistence has a 100% track record against evil.

The Good News is perhaps the best thing that God has for us. Jesus is King. We are invited to be coheirs in Jesus’ Kingdom – now. We are forgiven. Jesus’ grace is sufficient for all of our sins.

O, praise our Good Father – who lavishes us with His Loving Goodness!

Prayer

God, we confess that we do not always view you as Good – and even less often do we live that way. Forgive us, and remind us of your goodness – the promises, the hopes, and the love that you offer today, tomorrow, and for eternity! Amen.

Written by Pr. Andrew Potratz



Day 31 - March 21, 2018
“God Gives Me Faithfulness”

“For great is your love, reaching to the skies, your faithfulness reaches to the skies.” (Psalm 57:10)

David uses almost these exact words in several of his psalms. I read in a footnote to one of them (Psalm 36:5) that this idea has been written as ‘love-and-faithfulness’ – a compound expression, used as one thought. It’s a significant thought because of what it reveals about the connection between love and faithfulness. God is faithful to us **because** he loves us! His love for us is so vast that it makes His faithfulness just as great – they reach to the skies! By comparison, our human love can be so limited and imperfect that it makes faithfulness, even in small matters, very difficult. This is especially true for those of us who did not grow up knowing what real love and trusting words and behaviors looked like. It has been a long and difficult journey for me to understand and recognize God’s love and faithfulness in other people; but God is faithful, and He has been bringing Godly people into my life to show me and share with me His loving grace and goodness. This scripture verse gives me hope. If I can become more and more like Jesus, with the help of the loving Holy Spirit, my love-and-faithfulness will increase; and I will be able to pass on the love and faithfulness that has been so richly given to me.

Prayer

Father, we thank and praise you that you love us in such an awesome, immense way. Please grow our hearts to be more like yours, so that our increasing love-and-faithfulness will reveal You to others and be a blessing to them. Amen.

Written by Laura Gardner



Day 32 – March 22, 2018
“God Gives Me Compassion”

“The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.” (Psalm 103:8)

One of the greatest (and often true) judgements on Western Christianity is that it displays a lack of compassion.

As we dig deeper into God’s heart and understand how God wants to lavish us with life, we see an abundance of compassion. This is displayed in the Old Testament when Israel repeatedly walked away. It is displayed through the life and ministry of Jesus – the key to the Father’s heart. It is displayed through the grace of the cross and in the offer of eternity with our loving Father.

However, as in all things, we all fall short. My own blindness to compassion is most noticeable when I lack experiential understanding. For whatever reason, we often pass judgement on those who are unknown to us. Perhaps it’s the drug addict, the homeless, or the single pregnant teenager – it is easy to judge first; but does this display the Heart of God? Is our call, as followers of Christ, to justify a lack of love or to love with the holy compassion that God gives to those who love Him?

Our outlooks and our lives change when we humble ourselves to God’s Heart - bearing the fruit of Love, Grace, Light, and Compassion. If our own hope is in Christ, we know that we must live and act as though Christ is everyone’s hope – as He truly is. Our compassion can bring this truth to life.

Prayer

God, You promise us compassion; and You ask us to live with the same compassion. Forgive us for living in the abundance of Your grace without passing that grace onto others. Grow in us the branches of compassion, so that we may truly love others as You love them. Amen.

Written by Pr. Andrew Potratz



Day 33 – March 23, 2018

“God Gives Me Rest”

“Truly my soul finds rest in God; my salvation comes from him.”
(Psalm 62:1)

David shows in this Psalm that he relies on God in all things - not just in the bold and fantastic, but in the common and the mundane. Rest is important. Our souls are replenished and nourished through rest.

With so much focus in our culture on going, doing, and taking action, it is easy to view rest in terms of being a weakness. Have you ever heard someone say, “I’ll rest when I’m dead” or “No rest for the weary”? We have exalted a cult of busyness in our society. There is a common phrase in auto-mechanic circles that says, “Slow enough to lean, slow enough to clean.” The thought is that if the shop is so slow that you are leaning up against a wall or toolbox, you should look busy by grabbing a mop and start cleaning! Now this is good advice in general to keep a tidy shop, but in reality it was usually a case of “Look busy so the foreman doesn’t yell at you!”

If we are busy, we are accomplishing something. If we are resting, we are not. This is the assumption that keeps people working 80 hour weeks and for employers to lay-off workers but expect the same amount of work. We probably all go through seasons of “busy” that run us from place to place without rest. So where can we turn? Our rest is in God.

Does this mean that God helps us sleep or that God is telling us to quit that job? Perhaps, but consider maybe a deeper rest, a rest that comes through faith in God and trusts in his salvation for us. A rest that saves us no matter what external forces work upon us. A rest that we can turn to through Christ’s light that shines within us. This is the rest promised to us. This rest is in Him.

Prayer

Dear Lord, help us to know a deep, abiding rest in You. Surround us with the comfort that comes with Your deep and abiding love. Dwell within us, and bring us to a true and eternal rest that relies solely on Your grace. Amen.

Written by Anthony Palm



Day 34 – March 24, 2018

“God Gives Me Purity”

“Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.” (Psalm 51:10)

Do these words sound familiar to you? They probably do if you attend the 9:00 a.m. worship service. Instead of the word ‘pure,’ the song we often sing asks for God to create a ‘clean’ heart in us. ‘Clean’ is a good definition for ‘purity’; something is being cleansed of its impurities, in this case, the heart. The Biblical definition for the heart is that it is the center of the human spirit, from which spring emotion, thought, motivation, courage and action. Having a ‘clean’ or ‘pure’ heart is clearly very important.

About a year ago, the Holy Spirit started to impress upon my thoughts the need to ‘clean’ my heart. Having been given a new heart and a new spirit at my salvation, I thought my work as a Christian was finished. Though I’ll always have my salvation as a saved person, my fleshly spirit continues to be active and a problem. The Holy Spirit gently, but persistently, brings to my awareness areas that need to be cleaned – times of pride, anger, unforgiveness – all those things that don’t look or sound like Jesus. The ‘cleaning’ process has meant acknowledging those sins, confessing them and surrendering my will to God, as Lord of my life. He, alone, sees and knows my heart; and He, alone, can do the purifying.

What is the result of this cleansing? For me, it has meant that wherever areas of impurity and spiritual darkness have been removed, there is now additional space for the Light, wisdom, peace and joy of the Holy Spirit to fill. This is a renewing and transforming process. Let me gently ask, ‘Have you looked at the state of your heart?’ The Holy Spirit lovingly waits for that invitation.

Prayer

*Heavenly Father, thank you for the purifying power that only You can bring to our hearts. Grant us the courage to face our sinfulness, which will open the way to more of your Spirit in our daily lives. May this increasing Light help in building Your kingdom, as we become more and more able to reflect Your goodness to all those we meet.
Amen.*

Written by Laura Gardner



Day 35 – March 26, 2018

"God Gives Me Hope"

“For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from him.”
(Psalm 62:5 ESV)

Psalm 62 is a song of confidence by one who knows from personal experience that only in God can assurance and security be found. The Psalm reflects David’s trust in the Lord, despite severe opposition. In silence he waited for God to deliver him from his deceitful enemies. God is his **strength, security, and Hope**.

Hope is one of the most overused and misunderstood words in our language today. Many would define hope as wanting something to happen or be true. This view of the word gives little confidence in attaining the desired result or is basically betting on the percentages that something will happen in your favor. But David did not look at hope that way. Hope means much more than that.

My wife, Debbie, loves acronyms. She uses them to remember certain truths she learns from Scripture. You will find numerous acronyms written throughout her study Bible. When I asked her what she thought of Hope, she gave me the following acronym: **H** – He, **O** – Offers, **P** – Peace, **E** – Eternal. What a wonderful way to give a proper definition of God’s hope! You see, hope is not assurance in what you desire, but it’s in the person you have your desire in – Jesus Christ. Our confidence is in Jesus, who is our **strength, security, and Hope**.

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, thank You that my hope is firmly anchored and eternally secured to Jesus Christ, the Rock of my salvation. I pray that I may hold fast to the blessed hope that has set my eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of my faith. I praise You for my wonderful hope in Jesus, who died for me that I might have hope in this world and life everlasting. To Him be all praise, glory, and honor. Amen.

Written by Rick Kloos



Day 36 - March 27, 2018
“God Gives Me Provision”

“Our barns will be filled with every kind of provision. Our sheep will increase by thousands, by tens of thousands in our fields.” (Psalm 114:13)

This Psalm was written when David came to be recognized as the king over all the tribes of Israel. He is voicing his praise and joyful anticipation of the prosperity of his kingdom.

I’m pretty sure each and every person has had worries about money sometime in their lifetime. I most certainly have, and one particular instance that sticks out to me is right before our oldest daughter was born. At the time we found out we were expecting I was earning the largest income for our household, but God put it on our hearts that I should take time off of work to stay home with our newborn daughter. I remember being both excited about the prospect of spending time with our daughter and also scared and worried about how we could afford it. Despite my fears and apprehension, we put our trust in God; and He provided us with what we needed. I may have been worried at the time and unsure of the decision, but I know now it was absolutely the right choice for us.

David trusted that God would provide “every kind of provision.” We, too, need to trust that God will provide for us. God has reminded us time and again to not worry, in many passages throughout the Bible. One of my favorite passages has always been Matthew 25:34: “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?”

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank You for always providing us with exactly what we need. Please help us to let go of the worry that is in our hearts and put our full trust in You. Amen.

Written by Sarah Palm



Day 37 - March 28, 2018
“God Gives Me Comfort”

“Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me.”
(Psalm 23:4)

I love this version of the 23rd Psalm from the NLT (New Living Translation) Bible. I can actually envision the Good Shepherd walking next to me. When faced with trials on this earth, we can take comfort in the fact that God never lets us walk through them alone.

I experienced God’s comfort in a very deep and personal way shortly after I received the call that my mom had passed away. Because she lived on the other side of the country, I was not able to spend much time with her during her many illnesses and health issues; nor was I able to be with her when she passed. As I rushed to make plans to fly to Arizona after her death, I was having trouble holding myself together. I remember crying out to God and asking Him to give me peace. Almost immediately a feeling of calm and comfort started to come over me; and I felt true peace, like I had never felt before. At that moment, I sensed God telling me, “I’ve got her. She’s with me; take heart.” The Bible reminds us - God is our merciful father and the source of all comfort. Though we must experience difficult things in this world, like the death of a loved one, God promises to be with us when we do, to walk beside us and to bring us comfort. How reassuring that is!

I am so thankful for the many ways God gives His comfort to us, his beloved children...through His Word, a hug or a kind word from a friend, a sense of peace during a trying time...

Prayer

Father God, our source of **all** comfort, thank you for always being with us and for walking with us through life’s journeys - the good times and the bad. We are blessed by your promise to protect and comfort us in this uncertain world and by your promise of your eternal comfort. Amen.

Written by Ramona Sholander



Day 38 – March 29, 2018 “God Gives Me Truth”

“Show me your ways, O LORD, teach me your paths; guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.”
(Psalm 25:4-5 NIV)

“I swear!” I promised, with my left hand on my Bible which my best boyhood friend, Jerry, held. My right hand was raised as if I were a witness taking the solemn oath in court. I lied. We were ten, grade school best friends, until that moment. Jerry had accused me of telling a secret that started a rumor about him that caused him considerable embarrassment. Seeing my Bible on my desk, he held it out and demanded, “Swear!” And so, to keep from appearing to be the betrayer of my best friend, I lied to my best friend, betraying him a second time... denying him the truth. Two things happened immediately. Inseparable beforehand, suddenly I now wished Jerry would go away. And later that day, when I tried to pray, God seemed absent, as if He weren’t listening and seemed very far away. This is my first conscious memory of intentional sin and the separation that results, and it shook me to my core.

Truth is, my self-centeredness and selfishness get in the way of my loving God with my whole being and loving my neighbor as I ought. Putting my Self at the center of my life and making my own well-being the goal makes me blind to the truth of my sin. I easily find faults in others but can’t see the same faults in myself. All too easily I will minimize, excuse, overlook, or deny my own sins, building a wall of separation between myself and others. Worse yet, I build a bulwark of self-deception or self-justification to make all my actions seem better than they are. I am pretending to appear better than I truly am.

Enter Jesus. “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life,” Jesus proclaims, and proves it with His life...and death, on the cross...and resurrection. Smearred as “the friend of sinners” by his detractors, Jesus even called Judas, his disciple turned betrayer, “Friend” when Judas kissed Jesus to identify him to the mob that arrested him before his Crucifixion. Jesus’ heart is for sinners like me, to bring us back to God. Jesus is not only truth-*full*, He *is* Truth. Just as the Bible says that “God *is* Love” (1 John 4.8), truth also is God’s very nature, God’s true way of being. True to His nature, Jesus prays *for me* when he prays for all those who are crucifying him: “Father forgive them, they don’t know what they are doing.” It is my sins and betrayal for which his life-blood atones. I am reconciled to God when he is rejected in my place on the cross. By grace through faith, I am a forgiven sinner. By His sacrifice, I am made an innocent child of God, alive once more in the family of God. Now I am freed by the grace of God to let God be God and to be who I was redeemed to be and truly am in Christ: a “little Christ,” on the path again, loving God and my neighbor, stumbling and falling, yet always being lifted up by God’s unending grace to go on.

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, You are the Way that I seek; You are the Truth that I desperately need, You are the very Life that God created me to share. Show me Your ways and teach me Your paths. Holy Spirit, guide me into all truth and teach me. Heavenly Father, You are my God. My hope is in you all day long, and I have no other hope--nor any other desire--than You and Your will alone. Amen.

Written by Pr. Dave Shockey



Day 39 – March 30, 2018

“God Gives Me Shelter”

“I long to dwell in your tent forever and take refuge in the shelter of your wings.” (Psalm 61:4)

Do you long for this? Why or why not?

Many metaphors are poetically used throughout Scripture to highlight qualities of our Heavenly Father. Even “Father” itself is one of these, as the entirety of God cannot be summed up in a single human-experienced relationship. For this verse, taking shelter in the wings makes me think of the countless species of birds who do just this for their offspring.

As a child I certainly loved a good cuddle with my mom; but as I grew, I began to be far more independent than what my parents were ready for! There were many ways in which they lovingly tried to shelter me from evil, poor decisions, or even from those who believed other things about God and life than they did. I often resented how “over-protective” my parents could be, sometimes without explanation. As they are no longer with me on earth, I now wish I had another opportunity to be sheltered with their love.

The Good News is that God still offers this – better so than my parents could offer it. We should LONG for God to shelter us. As the young bird is warmly comforted in the mother’s protective embrace, so we should seek out God’s warm and loving protection in our own lives.

There is no better place to be than in the shelter of God’s wings.

Prayer

God, You promise us shelter and protection. Grow in us a longing to seek it out and to experience the sweetness of Your presence. Make our hearts into Yours, and show the world Your love through our own ability to lovingly provide shelter for others who need Your love. Amen.

Written by Pr. Andrew Potratz



Day 40 – March 31, 2018

“God is My Strength”

“Proclaim the power of God, whose majesty is over Israel, whose power is in the heavens.”

“You are awesome, O God in your sanctuary; the God of Israel gives power and strength to his people. Praise be to God!” (Psalm 68:34-35)

I love these verses because they let me know I don't have to be the strongest person in the world to deal with my problems. I have God helping me and lifting me up when I have difficulties.

I was bullied for most of my middle school life, and I got tired of it. I wanted to make people think they couldn't hurt me because of my size. Because of those experiences, I always think about not being strong enough to protect my loved ones and to protect myself. It is the biggest concern I always worry about, although I really shouldn't. I know God is on my side; and He will keep me safe and the ones I love safe, because He is strong enough to protect everyone. God is the one true God who can protect, and the one true God whose power is in the heavens and in all of His children. Because I am younger than most people writing these devotions, you might assume I don't know what I am talking about, but I know that God gives me my strength. I know I am a child of God because He, alone, has given me my strength, physically and emotionally. He equips people who follow and praise Him.

My life has gotten better because I have God's strength going through my body and my soul. He is the only one who can give true strength, because He is the Holy God of heaven and earth.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, You have the strength to protect everyone and everything. We thank You for giving us the strength to handle what life throws at us. We know that you would never give us a test that we cannot pass. May our strength and gifts from You be used to glorify You and Your Holy Son. Amen.

Written by Chase Ely



NOTES:

