



a people
after

God's OWN Heart

2018 Lent Devotionals

BOOK ONE

WRITTEN BY THE PEOPLE OF
HEBRON LUTHERAN CHURCH

Day 1 - February 14, 2018

“God is my Hope”

“Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from him.” (Psalm 62:5)

Turning my mind to God is the only way I can find true rest, and I am thankful for the hope that He gives me in this fallen and broken world.

Hope...and rest...two things that are hard to find these days. Fights over politics, constant disagreements, general put-downs of our fellow man, coupled with constant stress over things like overdoses, nuclear bombs, poverty, violence...how can we possibly find hope in these chaotic times?

I have felt it overwhelming me sometimes...in constant praying for prodigals, workplace squabbles, family deaths, my dear friend's miscarriages...but when I turn my thoughts and focus to God instead, and remember His promises, I can find rest and relief.

Rest...and hope...in God alone. No matter what we may face on this fallen earth, God is our strength and our hope, just like He was for David all those years ago. Stress and worry can always threaten us; but when I stop and put my focus back on God's Word, I can find peace. My worry can turn to hope in Him.

Thank you, God, that your words sustain me and give me hope in the darkness. Thank you for all the blessings you have given us, and help us every day to focus on them and your awesome power instead of the stress of this world and our worries.

Prayer

God, fill us with your Spirit, and give us your rest, so that your Hope shines through us to others! Amen

Written by Roben Dixon



Day 2-February 15, 2018
“God Is My Rock”

“He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be greatly shaken.” (Psalm 62:2)

Psalm 62 is a chapter of surrendering our souls to God and waiting on Him alone, especially when life feels unsure or rocky.

A few months ago, I was vacationing in Estes Park, Colorado. All around me were beautiful mountains and trees, full of golden leaves that were changing colors for the Fall. All around me I was witnessing God’s beautiful creation! However, I was standing at the base of a giant rock climbing wall, and I did not feel ready to face this new and unsure territory.

I was determined to climb up the wall because at the top was a zip line that looked really fun! I had a harness on, with a spotter waiting at the bottom, ready to catch me if I fell. As I started climbing, the terror set in! I was saying to myself, “This is harder than I thought! You can’t do this! This is just too hard!” I kept yelling down to the spotter, “You got me, right?!” The spotter would yell back to trust her, and that she had me if I fell. At one point, I did fall; and she had me! She took my weight so I could keep going. When I made it to the top, I got to zip line down for a thrill ride and a moment of rejoicing in all that I accomplished!

When we are in the midst of life, there can be some very tough times and all we want to do is turn back; but God is whispering to us, “I’ve got you! Trust me!” Sure enough, if we fall, He is there to pick us up and be our Rock when we feel shaken! I praise God because when we fail, feel afraid, or even when we lack faith, He is there to lift us up and keep us steady. All we need to do is surrender our souls to Him and recognize that He is the one who is our Rock!

Prayer

Thank you, God, that you are strong and mighty. You are a mighty Fortress and a sturdy Rock. Help my faith to not be like shifting sand, but help me to fully surrender to you and trust you alone. When we feel afraid or unsure of the steps ahead, lead the way with a firm foundation.
In Jesus Name, Amen.

Written by Allison Potratz



Day 3 - February 16, 2018
“The Lord is my Refuge”

"Have mercy on me, my God, have mercy on me, for in you my soul takes refuge. I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings until the disaster has passed. (Psalm 57:1)

It is believed that this passage was written while David hid in the caves to escape King Saul. We call on God's faithful help and love in times of trouble. When we face trials, God will quiet our hearts and give us confidence. How many of you, like me, can relate to calling on God when we are in trouble? We take refuge under his wings when we are at our lowest, knowing that God is always there for us. He is a constant in our lives and always welcomes us back with open arms when we stray; but wouldn't it be amazing if we always remembered to take refuge in Him, to come into His presence, even when things are going our way? Sometimes we forget to be thankful for our smallest blessings, overlooking the Grace that He gives us each and every day. No matter how busy we get, it would be awesome if we remembered to stop and pause and take refuge under his wings, even when life is great! I know I personally struggle to remember to do this at times.

Praise Jesus for His Grace; that even when times are great, He waits with open arms for us to come into the shelter of His wings. When times are tough, we can escape to the safety of His presence, like David in his cave, and we can feel His loving embrace sheltering us.

Prayer

Good and gracious Father, help us to remember that when times are tough we may hide in Your arms until the disaster has passed. May we also remember to seek You out when life is good, knowing that no matter the circumstance, we will always find refuge under Your wings.

Written by Rachel Ely



Day 4 – February 17, 2018
“God Is My Redeemer”

“Into your hand I commit my spirit; you have redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God.” (Psalm 31:5)

Hundreds of years before Jesus, words from Golgotha are proclaimed in the Psalms. How can we commit our spirits into the hands of the Almighty?

If you’re anything like me, prayer can often be subject to short term memory loss. We pray with earnest sincerity for general or specific aspects of our lives – and hours (or even minutes) later we act as if we had never placed those things in His hands. We commit our lives to God, and then we take them back out of a desire to control, feelings of anxiety, or even just our routines.

I know that we all struggle with this on various levels; but God has shown me, that like many things, our surrender of our spirits to God is a process. Indeed, Christ’s work of making us into His likeness is not an easy one. With high challenge comes high invitation – an invitation to grow, learn, and radiate God’s love.

We praise you, Lord, for being trustworthy to handle and hold onto our lives. We praise you for the faith to even consider this blessed reality.

Prayer

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, thank you for redeeming us. Thank you for graciously holding our very lives in the hollow of your hands. Help us to trust, both in the moment of prayer and in the moment that follows. Into your hands we commit our spirits. Amen.

Written by Pr. Andrew Potratz



Day 5 – February 19, 2018
“God Is My Shepherd”

“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want (I have all I need),” (Psalm 23:1)

When I think of shepherds, I immediately think of sheep and picture them just meandering around until their shepherd leads them where he wants them to go. I can really relate to sheep. I have gone through seasons in my life away from our Good Shepherd. I have wandered off to seek my own path, without being led. It’s never worked out very well. When I’ve looked for peace and joy on my own, it’s always been a dead end where I end up lost and alone. It’s taken me many years and many tries to finally understand why our Lord is referred to as a shepherd. Sheep are 100% dependent on their shepherd. He must lead them to food and water. He must provide shelter in the storms and protection from those who wish to harm his flock. Sheep have it better than we do in some ways. They have nothing to worry about. They have no distraction from trusting and following their shepherd. They don’t have kids to drive to practice, movies to watch or Facebook to browse! They have only to follow their shepherd. How much simpler would our lives be if we focused first on following and trusting our shepherd?

I thank God often that I was able to get out of my own way and learn to follow His lead for my life. I am at my best when I let go of the control and worry and follow His lead. His vision and direction for my life is better than I could have imagined, and I look forward to following His path.

Prayer

Lord, thank you for meeting all my needs, even before I know them. Thank you for all the many blessings in this life, especially the smallest ones that we take for granted. Please give me the power of your Spirit to put my trust in you. Allow my life to honor you in all I do. Amen

Written by Chad Ely



Day 6 - February 20, 2018
“God is my Healer”

“LORD my God, I called to you for help, and you healed me.” (Psalm 30:2)
Attributed to David for dedication of the Temple, it is a shout of praise to God as the solution to our mortal diseases, both physical and spiritual. Just as in David’s time, it is ever important to recognize that God is the ultimate source for our salvation and healing, if we only remember to ask.

While growing up I often heard from my elders the adage, “If you’re not fifteen minutes early, you’re late.” As I grew I endeavored to heed this advice and be early. In fact, I entered life early— about a month early. Born prematurely, the doctors found that aside from a naturally lower birth weight, that there was something amiss with my heart. An exploratory surgery was conducted, wherein it was discovered that there was a small amount of leakage between two of the chambers of the heart where the tissue had not yet completed growing. If things did not correct themselves, the possibility of open heart surgery was going to be an option. Not sure what to do, my mother prayed on it. Placing her faith in God, she decided to see if things would mend in their own time. My heart was monitored over several years. Over time the tissue finished growing, and the problem corrected itself.

Following my mother’s example, I too, prayed when my son underwent surgeries related to his cerebral palsy, putting my faith that God’s hand would guide the surgeons to whom I entrusted him. Despite the uncertainty I may have felt during the surgery, I had faith that things would work out as God intended.

Indeed, the calls for help from my mother and from me were each, in their own ways, answered by God.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the amazing machine of the human form - inspired, created, nurtured, and when necessary, healed by you. May we always remember that you are always there to help us with our burdens and to heal our hearts and minds through your grace. Only through You can we be healed and made whole. Amen

Written by Kevin Schroeder



Day 7 – February 21

“God Is My Deliverer”

“From the Lord comes deliverance. May your blessing be on your people.” (Psalm 3:8)

David wrote this psalm when he was on the run from Absalom, his son, who had attempted to overthrow him. David was “outmanned and outgunned,” as the modern saying goes. He was on the run in hiding, nowhere or no one turn to; he could have easily turned to despair and despondence, instead he turned to God.

Many of us, including me, have faced trials, be they be they physical and/or mental illness, loss of loved ones through death or divorce, job loss, financial difficulties or any number of difficulties. While I have faced a few of those on the list, my Absalom which pursued me was and occasionally still is anxiety and depression.

There were times that I thought I would be overcome by these foes, even while I put up a good front. Anxiety often filled my life with fear and panic, but God was and is faithful. God sustained me during the worst time, as I cried out for Him. And while my deliverance didn’t come from a single battle as it did for David, it did come gradually through the people and tools God placed in my life.

God does heed our prayers and provide deliverance. He may deliverer us in our circumstances before He deliverers us from our circumstances, but He will deliver us... for salvation belongs to Him.

Prayer

Almighty Father, fill us with your Holy Spirit so that we might have faith in your deliverance, even during those times that we feel there is no end to our afflictions. Be our shield, our sustainer, our deliverer. Amen

Written by Larry Mabry



Day 8 – February 22, 2018
“God is My Creator”

“For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. (Psalm 139:13-14)

Knitting is time-consuming, detail-oriented, and intentional.

In the summer of 2002, I was on camp staff as a Junior Counselor at Riverside Bible Camp in central Iowa. For most summers, one of the daily themes centered around creation and/or God’s creation of humanity. This was the verse for that day in that summer. It was roughly put to the Scooby Doo theme song tune; I’m singing it in my head right now!

For sixteen years now this verse has been in my mind. That summer God gifted me with a measure of faith to solidify my desire to live for Him. I received my identity as a carefully-knitted, made-on-purpose, Child of God. This is an intimate identity given to all image-bearers of God through Jesus Christ. We are all wonderful works of the Creator.

Whether reality has set in or not, consider it pure JOY that God has seen fit to create you! God has intimately created each and every human life on this earth – what a blessing! We are all here on purpose!

Prayer

Father and Creator, we thank you for lovingly knitting each of us together. We confess that we do not always live in this reality, and we ask for your life and fervor to do so! As we live into our own identities in Christ, help us to show others their God-given identities as well! Amen!

Written by Pr. Andrew Potratz



Day 9 - February 23, 2018
“The Lord is my Guide”

"He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way."
(Psalm 25:9)

Sometimes when we feel so lost and don't know where to turn, we need to remember that God is our ultimate tour guide, if we would only seek Him out and listen to His directions.

We are bombarded today with relentless appeals to go in various directions. Television advertising alone places hundreds of options before us, in addition to appeals made by political parties, cults, false religions and dozens of other groups. Numerous organizations, including Christian ones, seek to motivate us to support a cause. Add to that the dozens of decisions we must make concerning our job, our family, our money, our society, and we become desperate for someone to show us the right way. If you find yourself pulled in several directions, remember that God teaches the humble HIS way, the right way.

Prayer

Abba Father, we become so weighed down with our responsibilities and choices that we seldom pause and seek Your advice. Help us to seek You first before we make decisions. Guide our actions and our words to glorify Your Name. Amen.

Written by Rachel Ely



Day 10 – February 24, 2018
“God is My Protector”

“You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance.” (Psalm 32:7)

Not only are we promised protection and refuge, but we are promised songs in His presence.

David certainly had need for refuge in his life. Psalm 32 is often thought to have been written in the wake of David’s adultery. Psalm 51 is thought to have been written first, and then 32 perhaps after more reflection. Often we consider a “protector” to be needed, not in the wake of our own sin and failure, but in the tumultuous evil world in which we reside. Why does David, a person after God’s own heart, affirm God as Protector in this context?

There certainly could be many reasons, but two seem to stand out here. First, the repented sinner understands best the need for protection from future temptation. This has certainly been apparent in my own life, as I walk and conform to Christ’s likeness. Second, could it be that God protects us *in the midst of our brokenness*? That our fall into sin and our realization of that sin might still be something in which God protects? Indeed, it seems that Christ did just that. Interjecting grace, forgiveness, and protection even when the world was lost in brokenness. Even when we are.

The notion that God protects us – and surrounds us with songs of deliverance – should encourage us. Give praise! You are not alone. You have never fallen so far as to leave God’s love for you!

Prayer

Lord, protect us from sin when we face temptation. Protect us, our spirits, and our beings from unhealthy guilt and shame when we do face our sin. Restore us with songs of deliverance – proclaiming your love, goodness, and grace – a grace which David knew and loved. Amen.

Written by Pr. Andrew Potratz



Day 11 - February 26, 2018
“God Is My Light”

“The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?” (Psalm 27:1)

It is no surprise that the ideas of light and darkness permeate scripture. Ever since creation God has made His presence known by shining light into dark places.

I grew up through my adolescence without a smartphone. So you are probably wondering how I was able to waste time in elevators or send smiley faces to friends. Rather, it was because of this fact that I was particularly nervous one very dark and rainy night when my car went dead on the interstate. I was traveling back home from college and I had a very primitive cell phone, with very limited charge and coverage. I had just enough of both to call my parents and describe where I was. Then I waited for the tow truck.

While sitting there in the darkness, I had a twitch of fear every time I saw light in the rearview mirror, as large trucks sped by my car. Sometimes I wonder if this isn't how people who are far from God feel about His light. They see it as ominous and foreboding. We know from the psalmist and the gospel of John that God's light shines within each of us. How we respond to the light becomes the key to faith and a relationship with our Creator. As we navigate difficult times in life, we are to be strengthened by the salvation of the inward light, Christ Jesus - just as I was when I saw those tow truck lights.

Prayer

Holy Spirit, strengthen us in the power of your light. Help us to seek your heart and your nature. Let your light shine through us and bring a beacon of hope, healing, and salvation to this dark world. Amen

Written by Anthony Palm



Day 12 – February 27, 2018
“God is My Ruler”

“All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations will bow down before him, for dominion belongs to the Lord and he rules over the nations.”
(Psalm 22:27-28)

If there is one thing to be said here about our culture, we are not “bowing” people. Yet our God is worthy of it.

I happen to be wired to be rather independent. I do not need a lot of close friends, and I prefer to set my own schedule from day to day. I am wired that way; and although I must often lay down those desires for something else (like my family, my vocation, etc.), it does not come naturally to me. Even more so, I, along with men in our culture, have a difficult time “bowing” to anyone or anything for which we do not hold respect and/or love.

I do have respect for God. He has proven His character. And I do love God, as I have experienced the incredible grace and love of Jesus and the daily presence of the Holy Spirit. So why do I not bow? Sometimes getting down on our knees to pray carries with it more gravity than we often consider. God is *worthy* of our praise – our humility – our bowing, not just in prayer but in all things. We also can trust that our Ruler is just, loving, and compassionate.

Let us bow together, on our knees, and recognize our Ruler in every aspect of life – since it was He who gave us life in the first place.

Prayer

Lord, humble our hearts so that we may bow in body, mind, heart, and strength. You deserve our praise. Help us to honor you in this way. Amen.

Written by Pr. Andrew Potratz



Day 13 – February 28, 2018
“God Is My Rescuer”

“Turn your ear to me, come quickly to my rescue; be my rock of refuge, a strong fortress to save me.” (Psalm 31:2)

David’s situation was very serious; mine was not. In fact, it looked a little silly; but the implied promise of God’s rescue and love was the same.

My refuge and strong fortress turned out to be the back, open end of my 2002 Honda CRV. It was open for candy distribution at HLC’s first Trunk or Treat at Halloween. It was a very cold night, and for my granddaughter, Elizabeth, and me cold air is like torture. We wanted to give out candy, but we were both shivering, miserable and grumbling. My loving daughter, Diane, saw and heard our need and came to our rescue. She insisted that Elizabeth and I should sit in the open trunk, tucked away under cozy blankets she had brought. She even sacrificed her warm scarf and gloves so I could be warm. Then she and my other granddaughter, Laura, (who loves the cold!) braved the elements and cheerfully gave out the candy we had brought.

Diane’s example of sacrificial love touched me deeply. As the Lord’s servant, she saw a need and came to my rescue and gave me refuge. It caused me to reflect in a deeper way about how very much Jesus must love us all, a love so strong that He would willingly sacrifice himself in a most excruciating way on the cross. By that death He rescued us all from our sinfulness and granted us eternal life with Him, now and in the future. Thanks and praise to our loving Lord for His incredible gift of new life to all who will receive it.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we can never thank and praise you enough for seeing and hearing our need to be rescued from our sinfulness. You met that need by your own sacrificial death because of your unconditional love for us, just as we are. Please grow our hearts to be like yours, so that as your servants we, too, can see and hear those around us in need and respond to those needs with loving words and actions that reflect your amazing grace. Amen

Written by Laura Gardner



Day 14 – March 1, 2018
“God Is My Leader”

“Since you are my rock and my fortress, for the sake of your name, lead and guide me.” (Psalm 31:3)

God’s honor was at stake in the matter of the safety of His servant, David. David was under attack and his enemies were watching his response. David asks God to lead and guide him so he would be protected and so that the ensuing victory would bring honor to God.

It’s sobering to think that it’s not just my honor that is at stake in a difficult situation. If I’m known to be a Christian, how much more is God’s honor at stake in a watching world? Are others seeing Jesus’ character and love in my words and actions? I know they won’t if I don’t have the help of the Holy Spirit guiding and leading me each day.

It’s taken me a long time to come to a trusting faith to let only Jesus (through His Holy Spirit) be my leader and guide. I had always let the culture, the expectations and demands of others, the ‘need to please,’ the desire for recognition and pride guide my thoughts and actions. These ‘guides’ only led to selfishness and self-absorption. I have learned that when we follow the leadership and guidance of the Holy Spirit, the emphasis is not on self but on others. His path is the only one that leads to real joy, peace and love.

How thankful I am to Jesus for showing me a much better way to think, act, and speak. Under His leadership and guidance, I am learning how to reflect His love and goodness to others. When Jesus says, “Follow me,” we are guided to walk in a way that reflects Him to others. He always saw and acted to meet the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of those around Him. He still does.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, how blessed we are that you can turn us aside from where the world would lead us and bring us to the path you would have us take. You, alone, are indeed “The Way, the Truth, and the Life.” May our thoughts, words, and actions reflect you to a watching world and bring you glory and honor. Amen

Written by Laura Gardner



Day 15 – March 2, 2018
“God Is My Fortress”

“O my Strength, I will sing praises to you, for you, O God, are my fortress, the God who shows me steadfast love.” (Psalm 59:17)

Saul had sent his men to watch David’s house to watch for him to kill him. David needed a fortress with guards on the ramparts to provide covering fire as he dashed for safety, instead of his house; but David had the steadfast love of God instead!

While I’ve never needed the literal protection of a fortress, I have often wished for a place to hide from my (and your) enemies. Who are our enemies? In his letter to the Ephesian Church Paul warned us that, “We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly place.” Many in the Church have phrased it since then as the world, the power of the flesh, and Satan.

Do you ever feel assaulted by the news of war, famine, and the oppression of entire people groups? Bringing it closer to home, do you feel assaulted after seeing lives of strangers, friends, and loved ones destroyed by and lost to addictions, or children neglected or abused? Don’t you sometimes want to take your family far away and hide in safe place? What about our own failures, faults, and even sins? Don’t you feel the need for a strong tower to run to? You have one in the steadfast love of God.

Prayer

Almighty Father, let us never forget that You are our hiding place, our place to run to when assaulted by our enemies. Let us rest in You and help us to experience You as our fortress. Amen

Written by Larry Mabry



Day 16 – March 3, 2018 “God Is My Law-Giver”

“The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.” (Psalm 19:7, ESV)

The 19th Psalm, elegantly written by David, is known primarily for these words: *“The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.” (Psalm 19:1, ESV)*

This oft quoted psalm has been used by countless generations to proclaim the general revelation of God’s creation. But, as you continue to read further you will encounter the special revelation of God’s written Word, His Law.

When I was a just a young boy going to church, I couldn’t wait to attend our confirmation class that met on Saturday mornings. Now you would probably think because I have a post-graduate degree in Theology digging into God’s Word as a youth was just a natural progression of things to come. But, I need to confess. I wasn’t excited to study; my interest was shooting baskets in the church gym before class! I spent countless hours playing basketball, much to the dismay of my pastor who knew that I wasn’t putting forth my best effort.

It wasn’t only my pastor who knew about my lack of effort, God certainly knew and His plan for me was much different, which I thought was playing high school and college basketball. But, when I was going through a difficult time as a teenager I can remember crying out and asking God to lift my burdens from me. God showed me what I needed to lift – it was my Bible.

God’s Law through His written Word (special revelation) is how we know God and by His Son, Jesus Christ. In Psalm 19 David lists six names for God’s Word, six attributes of that Word, and six blessings that Word gives to believers. Verse 7 tells us His Word is perfect and sure, which makes our soul revive and the simple wise. God’s Word reveals himself to each of us - even to a mixed up simple minded teenage boy!

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you for giving us your Law found in your written Word, but more importantly your Son, Jesus Christ. Lord, help us to “lift up” our Bibles each day so that we can be refreshed, nourished and strengthened through your Words that are **perfect, trustworthy, right, radiant, pure, and sure**. Amen.

Written by Rick Kloos



Day 17 – March 5, 2018
“God is My Shield”

“As for God, His way is perfect: The Lord’s word is flawless; He shields all who take refuge in him.” (Psalm 18:30)

God’s way is perfect – yet, we still need a shield. I think it is safe to assume that not everything that happens on earth is God’s doing; would God need to shield us from Himself?

We sometimes get glimpses of the perfection that God radiates. For me, one of these moments came the first time I was part of a living-room prayer time at the home of a pastor in the town of my college. In that moment we were all focused on one thing - the Triune God. We were seeking, listening, sensing. We prayed for one another; we spent time in silence, and we reflected on God’s tremendous ability to make things new – even today.

Sometimes the glimpse of God’s perfection is in nature, in community, or elsewhere; but much of the remainder of our time is spent observing a world in brokenness. God’s flawlessness is often obscured by sin and evil. How great is this promise from the Psalmist? Great indeed – that the Creator of the universe would shield us, protect us, and sustain us in the midst of brokenness.

I consider it a joy that God acts FOR us. I consider it praiseworthy that our Creator has offered refuge in his Holy presence – a refuge that is available 24/7. Embrace it!

Prayer

Lord, thank you for giving us glimpses of your perfect love. Thank you for offering us refuge from the storms of life, and for relentlessly pursuing us to be restored to you! May our lives embrace your perfect refuge. Amen.

Written by Pr. Andrew Potratz



Day 18 – March 6, 2018
“God is My Salvation”

“The salvation of the righteous comes from the LORD; he is their stronghold in time of trouble.” (Psalm 37:39)

Salvation is “preservation or deliverance from harm, ruin, or loss;” and it comes from the LORD.

This verse suggests that our Salvation is something that is both “now and then” – meaning that God, being our “stronghold in time of trouble” today is somehow wrapped up in a word that we more commonly associate with “eternal salvation” or “paradise” or “heaven.” But it appears that salvation is something for us now as well. What does this mean for us?

As I often process many things in my mind before I speak or act (or write, in this case), I am confronted with the reality that I would be a wreck without a present-tense salvation. If I knew that I was not somehow in God’s grace today, and that I had to wait for God’s eternal significance to wash over me at some later date, I would be lost in my own thoughts of doubt, anxiety, and even hopelessness. Because the LORD is my salvation NOW, I am able to live both for today and for tomorrow. God has, is, and will be my stronghold – my salvation – my Savior.

I encourage us all to accept and consider the implications of TODAY’s salvation as well as the future’s. How can our Kingdom-of-God-Today lives reflect the realities of God: His Love, Grace, Hope, and Peace?

Prayer

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, You are our salvation. By no other means can we experience true life. Today, You are our salvation; and You shall be for eternity. We praise you for this incredible Kingdom reality! Amen.

Written by Pr. Andrew Potratz



Day 19 - March 7, 2018
“God Is My Helper”

“In my distress I called upon the Lord; to my God I cried for help. From his temple he heard my voice, and my cry to him reached his ears.” (Psalm 18:6)

Have you ever been in the midst of pain or sadness and thought, “Where are you, God?” Then weeks, months, or years later you think back and realize He was there, walking with you and comforting you every step of the way. When we cry out to God, he hears our voices and comes to our aid.

When I was a kid I had a cat named Kitsy. She was the sweetest cat and loved to snuggle with me. One of her amazing qualities was that whenever I was sad and crying, no matter where I was in the house, she would come running in, nuzzle my face and curl up with me. She may not have been able to speak words directly to me, but her closeness to me and her simple response of coming to meet me when she heard me in distress was enough to bring me comfort. God’s comfort is similar to that, and even more profound than my cat, Kitsy. When He hears our cry for help, He comes running in to meet us, right where we are at, to bring us comfort. He doesn’t want to leave us alone in our pain and sadness. In the story of the Prodigal son who comes home to his father empty-handed, depressed, and in the lowest point of his life - from a distance, he sees his father rushing to meet him with open arms!

God’s comfort and closeness to us in our times of distress is like a father running to meet his child with arms wide open! He lifts up our head, wipes away our tears, and wraps us in his loving arms!

Prayer

I love you, Lord. You are my Strength and my Refuge. When I call on you, you answer me and draw me to close to you. You are worthy to be praised. When I feel ensnared in life’s challenges, you alone come to comfort me and look out for me. Thank you for always rescuing me. In Jesus name, Amen.

Written by Allison Potratz



Day 20 - March 8, 2018
“God Is My Light”

“The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?” (Psalm 27:1)

It is no surprise that the ideas of light and darkness permeate scripture. Ever since creation God has made His presence known by shining light into dark places.

I grew up through my adolescence without a smartphone. So you are probably wondering how I was able to waste time in elevators or send smiley faces to friends. Rather, it was because of this fact that I was particularly nervous one very dark and rainy night when my car went dead on the interstate. I was traveling back home from college and I had a very primitive cell phone, with very limited charge and coverage. I had just enough of both to call my parents and describe where I was. Then I waited for the tow truck.

While sitting there in the darkness, I had a twitch of fear every time I saw light in the rearview mirror, as large trucks sped by my car. Sometimes I wonder if this isn't how people who are far from God feel about His light. They see it as ominous and foreboding. We know from the psalmist and the gospel of John that God's light shines within each of us. How we respond to the light becomes the key to faith and a relationship with our Creator. As we navigate difficult times in life, we are to be strengthened by the salvation of the inward light, Christ Jesus - just as I was when I saw those tow truck lights.

Prayer

Holy Spirit, strengthen us in the power of your light. Help us to seek your heart and your nature. Let your light shine through us and bring a beacon of hope, healing, and salvation to this dark world. Amen

Written by Anthony Palm



