

Devotions – September 9-15, 2018

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Sunday, September 9, 2018

Text: Proverbs 3:5-6 (NRSV)

⁵Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. ⁶In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

Change. As I share devotions with you this week, my focus is on change. Change happens every day; it happens all around us. As I write this I am preparing for a big change: I am getting married on September 8th. Along with the marriage will be a name change from Shriner to VanderSys. This will take some getting used to; my last name has been Shriner for seventeen years.

This is my second marriage. My first husband died ten years ago. A lot of change has occurred in these past ten years: learning how to live without someone you were with 24/7/365 (he was in a wheelchair); beginning seminary while also serving the church as a Licensed Lay Minister; changing roles from being a pastor's wife (my late husband was a pastor) to Licensed Lay Minister to pastor; serving the same congregation my late husband served; trying to find normalcy in life (is this actually possible?); and accepting a Call two years ago to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan (and answering the question, "why would you want to move up there?!").

I couldn't have done this on my own – and I didn't. I trusted the Lord to guide my way. It wasn't always easy but it certainly has been fulfilling. As I look to the future with my future husband, I pray God continues to direct me in the way God wants me/us to go.

Change happens every day; it happens all around us. Trust in the Lord to guide your way.

Prayer: Gracious Lord, we thank You for the blessings of this day. We ask that You continue to guide us on the path You have set before us. As we experience change in our lives, help us to be open to Your leading; in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

*I begin every prayer with, "we thank You for the blessings of this day". How simple, yet so powerful.



Monday, September 10, 2018

Text: Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: ²a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; ³a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; ⁴a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; ⁵a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; ⁶a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to throw away; ⁷a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; ⁸a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace.

Change. Today is my son's 38th birthday – a truly happy day for me. I am not sure I realized before he was born how much my life would change after his birth. It wasn't always easy but it certainly has been fulfilling. This seems to be a theme when I talk about personal change.

I've shared the Ecclesiastes' passage at many funerals though I believe it is appropriate to share at births as well. The passage is all about change: "a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted...a time to mourn and a time to dance..." It is through change that the first article becomes the second article. That is life. Nothing is constant - except God's love for us. That never changes. No matter how change affects us in life, God's love is constant. God's love certainly is fulfilling.

Prayer: Creator of all, we thank You for the blessings of this day. Guide the change that occurs in our lives daily. May we ever be mindful of the love You give to us that is constant, even when we stray from Your path; in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*



Tuesday, September 11, 2018

Text: Deuteronomy 31:6

'Be strong and bold; have no fear or dread of them, because it is the Lord your God who goes with you; he will not fail you or forsake you.'

Change. The world changed forever 17 years ago on this date: 9/11/2001. Terrorists flew commercial planes into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York, the Pentagon

in Washington, and a failed attempt that crashed in a field in Pennsylvania. It was hard to imagine there was this kind of evil in the world.

Tragic as this was, this change brought people closer together. Ecumenical groups shared prayer and memorial events. People seemed to be more compassionate, more caring, more aware of their neighbor and their neighbor's needs. People helped one another.

Sometimes I feel the world has changed "back", so to speak. We've resorted back to our old ways, our old words, our old attitudes. If my perception is correct, I pray that God guides us soon to change. Let it not take another tragedy to bring us together.

Though, at times, we may become fearful of what we hear and what we see, may we have faith that God, who is strong and powerful, will guide and protect us all the days of our lives.

Prayer: God of comfort, we thank You for the blessings of this day. We pray for those who continue to mourn the loss of their loved ones from this tragedy. Bless all who mourn. Give all Your people the assurance of Your never-failing love which sustains us throughout our lives; in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*



Wednesday, September 12, 2018

Text: Luke 1:59-80

On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him Zechariah after his father. ⁶⁰But his mother said, 'No; he is to be called John.' ⁶¹They said to her, 'None of your relatives has this name.' ⁶²Then they began motioning to his father to find out what name he wanted to give him. ⁶³He asked for a writing-tablet and wrote, 'His name is John.' And all of them were amazed. ⁶⁴Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue freed, and he began to speak, praising God. ⁶⁵Fear came over all their neighbors, and all these things were talked about throughout the entire hill country of Judea. ⁶⁶All who heard them pondered them and said, 'What then will this child become?' For, indeed, the hand of the Lord was with him.

⁶⁷ Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke this prophecy:

⁶⁸ 'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,

for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them.

⁶⁹ He has raised up a mighty savior* for us

in the house of his servant David,

⁷⁰ as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,

71 that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us.
72 Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors,
and has remembered his holy covenant,
73 the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham,
to grant us ⁷⁴that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies,
might serve him without fear, ⁷⁵in holiness and righteousness
before him all our days.
76 And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,
77 to give knowledge of salvation to his people
by the forgiveness of their sins.
78 By the tender mercy of our God,
the dawn from on high will break upon* us,
79 to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace.’
80 The child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day
he appeared publicly to Israel.

Change. Martin Luther once wrote, “If you want to change the world, pick up your pen and write.”

Writing produces change. Through Martin Luther’s writings, change occurred. His 95 Theses sparked a change that helped to shape the understanding of faith we have today.

Certainly, the world changed when Zechariah wrote on the tablet that his son’s name would be “John”.

Told that his wife would bear him a child, even at their elderly age, Zechariah questioned the angel of the Lord. His punishment? Being unable to speak. Acknowledging the Lord’s blessing and naming their child “John”, Zechariah wrote this name on the tablet. His mouth and tongue were freed.

John’s birth changed the world and prepared the way for Christ. Christ’s birth changed the world forever.

Prayer: Gracious God, we thank You for the blessings of this day. We pray that You continue to renew our spirit and give us hope and peace for this day; in Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.*



Thursday, September 13, 2018

Text: Psalm 107:1

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever.

Change. Fall is my absolute favorite time of the year. I love to watch the green leaves turn to vibrant reds, yellows and oranges. I like to walk outside and inhale the crisp air. I enjoy decorating my home with pumpkins, straw and mum plants, putting a fall-themed cloth and a pumpkin spice candle on the table. I relax by sitting around a campfire and sipping hot chocolate.

Elizabeth Lawrence once wrote, “Everyone must take time to sit and watch the leaves turn.” Fall energizes me; I’m not sure I could sit still long enough to watch a leaf turn. Can you?

Prayer: Creator God, we thank You for the blessings of this day. As we prepare for the change in season and for all that is to come, may we continue to thank You for Your goodness and mercy; in Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.*



Friday, September 14, 2018

Text: Philippians 4:6-7

Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Change. I’ve never considered myself a writer. Goodness, I started writing these devotions weeks ago and I’m submitting them just under the wire! I like to write, though. I’ve written articles for local newspapers, The Lutheran magazine, other publications and now this, Prayfaithfully Daily Devotions.

Writing the devotions for this week has changed me. I have spent more time praying and meditating and reading since I started writing these devotions than I probably have in a long time (or at least more than just my sermonizing).

There is more change coming around the corner but the scripture from Philippians gives me calm in the midst of anxiety. I pray you find peace and calmness in God’s peace, as well.

Prayer: God of peace, we thank You for the blessings of this day. Continue to inspire all who feel called to lead Your people. Stir up Your Spirit among us. Gather us into communities of faith to share Your Word, spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world; in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*



Saturday, September 15, 2018

Text: Hebrews 13:8

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

Change. For many churches, the start-up of fall programs begins tomorrow (if they haven't already). Our Sunday School begins tomorrow; our Confirmation program and Youth Group will begin in a few weeks. Bible Study, Women's groups, Men's groups, Intergenerational groups, Choir practices – what an exciting time to be the church! What a wonderful time to change things up in the church! Do something different. Excite people. Try something you've never done before. Change the hearts of people.

But remember this: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." Of this, we can be certain. Of this, we can teach.

Prayer: O God, our Guide, we thank You for the blessings of this day. We pray for the hearts, wisdom and patience of teachers and staff. Open the hearts and minds of those they teach; in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

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