

Devotions - June 3-9, 2007
By, Members of Shepherd of the Lakes Lutheran Church
Sayner, Wisconsin

Sunday, June 3

By Gladys James

Member of Shepherd of the Lakes Lutheran Church

After a stormy night, the morning was bright and sunny, and I was on schedule, ready to leave at 12:45 to attend a 1:30 funeral service – a 30 minute drive. My drive through the woods to the highway is not without problems, depending on the weather.

Today it was a big fallen oak tree and no way to turn around. Remembering my new neighbor's offer of help "anytime", I walked back to the house and called Chuck. He was there in a few minutes with a chain saw and I was on my way, missing only half of the services.

I don't know whether it's living in the great Northwoods and coping with downed trees and power outages - or old age – that has caused me to find that promised "place that passes all understanding" that I've been seeking all these years.

I'm certain it must be finally having learned to surrender my well laid plans to whatever God has in mind for the day and I am at peace trusting his judgment as "good".

Monday, June 4

By Florence Brooker

Charter member of Shepherd of the Lakes Lutheran Church

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult. Selah Psalm 46:1-3

Sharing my time with God alone
Opening my heart to hear His voice
Letting Him speak in gentle tones
In words to encourage and lighten my day
Telling me He's there when I need Him
Uplifting, blessing, guiding my way
Declaring me a child He's watching from above
Every joy, in every way, I'm wrapped in His love.

Dear God, thank you for watching over us. Bless our families, friends and all who are in need. Keep us safe by day and night in Jesus' name. Amen

Tuesday, June 5

By Joan Ebert, Librarian

Snowbird member of Shepherd of the Lakes Lutheran Church

“I will be with you always to the close of the age.” Matthew 28:20

“I want you to go in for a biopsy. It’s probably nothing to worry about – You’ll be home in two days.”

I mulled over the doctor’s words and after prayerful consideration agreed to set up a date.

After the procedure, I awake to find myself bound up with bandages. “Why?” I wondered. The reason was made clear when my husband came in and broke the news. Cancer has been found and amputation was necessary. As I viewed my now deformed body, he assured me that it made no difference to him. He loves me not what I looked like. WOW! How comforting to know that. Then there was a light bulb moment when I finally realized that God too loves and accepts each of us as we are. I recalled His words, “I will be with you always” and know that no matter what was in the future, I need not fear. What better constant companion could one have!

Lord, help me to remember that no matter whether the road of life is smooth or bumpy, you are there. With you, I can face whatever happens. I give you thanks and praise. Amen

Wednesday, June 6

By Darlene Mursett

Psalm 98:4 – “Make a joyful noise to the Lord.”

Joy, Joyful and Jubilee always have been words that put gladness in my heart. Somehow just knowing our God commands us to feel, express and celebrate joy joyfully. In Bible study when I realize how many times, at least 20, these words are in the Bible, I giggle a little and feel closer to my family in Christ.

Celebrate the gift of gladness in your heart. Amen

Thursday, June 7

By Don Bauer, Director of Music

St. John Lutheran Church, ELCA, Bartonville, Illinois

Transient Visitor to Shepherd of the Lakes Lutheran Church

What's with ALL THOSE KEYS?

I get that question a lot when people see me pull out my big key ring laden with what seems like several pounds of keys! Yes, I carry a LOT of keys...twenty two at last count, including cars, house, work, bikes, and six just for various church locks!

Keys are important; keys give us access, keys give us security; keys let us bind up important things!

St. Peter had even more keys on his key-ring. He had the keys to heaven! In Matthew 16, Jesus told him, *"I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."* We call that the "Office of the Keys", and use it to describe the authority allowing Pastors to pronounce absolution (forgiveness) for our sins following confession.

Luther goes on to tell us that this power is also expanded to us as God's Disciples, for in Matthew 18, Jesus said, *"Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven."*

Now you're probably asking "What's all this got to do with ME?" Well, can you think of any situation where you were part of a "group" of two who used this "office" to bind anything? Are you married? Then you probably heard these or similar words as part of your ceremony, *"your name and your spouse's name*, by their promises before God and in the presence of this congregation, have bound themselves to one another as husband and wife. Those, whom God has joined together, let no one separate." Whether you said BOUND or JOINED or similar words, the meaning is the same. You've made promises before God, and he will recognize and bless that union!

Many people celebrate wedding anniversaries in June. When your special day rolls around, remember the KEYS! You are bound to each other "until death parts us". Rejoice and give thanks for the years you've spent together and look forward to many more to come! If you're not married, remember to pray for those who are, asking him to bless and prosper what he has joined together.

Remember these familiar songs, "*Blest be the tie that Binds*" (ELW 656 or LBW 370) and "*Bind us Together*" (*With One Voice* 748). If you and your spouse share devotions or prayers, I suggest you read or sing the words of one of those hymns as you renew your commitment to each other:

*Bind us together Lord,
Bind us together, with cords that cannot be broken.
Bind us together Lord,
Bind us together Lord,
Bind us together in love.*

AMEN!

Friday, June 8

By Jim Carter

Lay School Student

Notice the Difference

“When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.” (Acts 4:13)

All of a sudden, it's popular to be “spiritual”. That's good, I hope. But let us never let what's secular define what is “spiritual” -- as in what a church should be or do or what a Christian should be or do. If we do let that happen, then we become more concerned about public relations than about preaching the claims of our Lord. Listen: “When they saw the boldness of Peter and John” (Acts 4:13). You can't walk with God and be timid. You can be gentle, but you can't be timid. You can be compassionate, but you can't be coerced by the opinions of those around you.

Paul wrote, “Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might”. (Ephesians 6:10) That kind of strength is not arrogance; it is resilience! It means refusing to budge when God tells you to stand firm, or to stay, when God says it is time to move on. Jesus never defined His purpose by the opinions of people. Nor did He try to impress them or to fit in with their ideas. He challenged them, changed them, and then called them to a life of discipleship...And that's still the way it is! Listen: “They took notice of them that they had been with Jesus”. (Acts. 4:13)

The world is looking for people who look and act as though they have been with Him. They'll be convinced only by the God you know, the One who has met all of your needs. So, today, make this your prayer: “Lord, others are watching, help them to see You in me.”

Saturday, June 9

By Karen Carter

Lay School Student

The Place

“Then the Lord said, ‘There is a place near Me where you may stand on a rock.’”
Exodus 33:21

His marriage was in trouble, his congregation was worshipping a cow, and Joshua, his closest friend, was having trouble understanding God’s ways. In a very real sense, Moses was totally alone...So, where do you go when the things you love and the people closest to you just aren’t enough? Here’s the answer: “There is a place near Me.” Now, be assured that the enemy will do everything he can to keep you from reaching this place...And once you’re there, he’ll do everything in his power to keep you from staying there too long.

There’s a reason for this: he knows that in this place you’ll find answers, real solutions to the problems you are facing. You will also find empowerment. After Moses had been there, his appearance changed, his words were far more effective and he was able to offer God’s people real direction. Yet, before he found it, he was no different from anyone else. In this place he also found rest. Listen: “My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.” (Exodus 33:14)

When you get overloaded your vision gets blurred and you become resistant to the very ideas you need because you just can’t handle any more. What’s the answer? “Listen again!” “There is a place near Me.” ... Make the passion of your life to find this place and then live in it!

Dear Lord Jesus, I need time with You so that You can fill me again to be effective for You. Protect me from the things that keep me from being near to You. Amen