

Devotions - November 18-24, 2007
by, Lawrence and Vicki Underhill
Bethany Lutheran, Norway

Sunday, November 18

by, Larry Underhill

How do you view the world? That seems to be a rather silly and straight forward question. I have new glasses. You can tell you are getting old when the eye doctor says "you need tri-focals!" Well, I have had "Bi's" for quite awhile, and now I have the infamous "Tri's." So again how do you see the world? The top of the glasses works very well, the bottom or bi-focal works well, it is that middle section that is playing havoc with my walking. How do you see the world?

A passenger on a train that had stopped to refuel looked out the window at the beautiful summer countryside. Suddenly a freight train pulled up on the adjoining track, blocking the view. "That always happens!" said the passenger. "Just as I am enjoying the view, another train comes along and ruins it!" The person sharing his seat, an older woman who had been sitting quietly said, "That does happen a lot, but have you ever stopped to think there are windows on both sides of the car?" The passenger looked around and saw that out of the other windows he could see blue sky, clouds, and a sparkling lake. "I have often found," said the woman, "that a lot depends on looking in more than one direction." How do you see the world?

We all know people, who are the "half-full" kind. My glass is only half full, not half empty. It is raining outside; not "wow, we can really use the rain." It is sunny outside; not "wow, it is going to be a hot one today, but we can use the sun." It is snowing outside; not "look at the beautiful soft snow flakes." How do you view the world?

God is always there, can you see him or do you just complain about what he has given you? God is with us each and every day, at all times, even when we complain. There are always some people that seem to feel better if they can complain about something. For me, I am so grateful to be able to see and enjoy all that God has provided me. I am blessed, are you? How do you see the world? If that means I see the world through rose colored glasses, so be it. I would much rather enjoy every day to the fullest than complain about what I have no control over. How do you see the world? Remember, God is out there and he hears all and knows all. He will not give you more that you are able to handle and if by some unknown reason it seems like you are at your wits end in troubles, remember God is always there. Ask for his help, view the world differently!

Monday, November 19

by, Vicki Underhill

In His Time

He made everything beautiful in its time. *Ecclesiastes 3:11*

At a recent women's gathering the hymn "*In His Time*" was sung. As the women were singing this hymn I was thinking what an important message this hymn has for us in our "hurry up and answer" my prayers world. We need to be patient and let God work "in His time."

In His time, In His time
He makes all things beautiful
In His time.
Lord, please show me ev'ry day
As You're teaching me Your way,
That You do just what you say
In Your time

In Your time, In Your time,
You make all things beautiful
In Your time.
Lord, my life to You I bring;
May each song I have to sing
Be to You a lovely thing
In Your time.

Words and Music: Diane Ball/Maranatha Music

Tuesday, November 20

by, Larry

Random Acts of Kindness

How do you start or end your day? Do you start your day by offering a prayer, thanking God for watching over us at night? Do you end your day by praying to God to watch over you throughout the night and thanking him also for helping you through the day? Isn't that a great way to start and end a day? But guess what, without our Veterans and the sacrifices that they made, we could not do that!

Sometimes we take our freedoms for granted. My father was part of the "greatest generation" or at least that is what they called the WWII vets. He was in the Navy and was at the Pearl Harbor attack. He never really spoke about his experiences; I guess that is because he did not want to relive them in his mind. Obviously, he survived the attack, here I am. However, we really need to take time to thank all of our vets for taking time out of their lives to allow all of us to do what we want. They did not want the war or wars, but they served in them. I am sure none of them wanted to be shot at or bombed, but they were. By their sacrifice, we can all sleep better and worship the way we please. Their sacrifice was and is tremendous.

Our church teaches us to do random acts of kindness. So why don't we all do something nice for a Vet? What? – might you ask. Anything unexpected would qualify. **WE ARE THE CHURCH, ALL OF US!** We need to spread our kindness and our goodness and set the example for everyone else. The best part of a random act of kindness, is the fact that only the giver (you) will know about it. Do not do it if you expect a reward! The reward will come later, says our God. Perform a random act of kindness because it is the right thing to do. Thank a Vet, do random acts of kindness. **THE REWARD IS GREAT!** Just think, for all of those random acts, at some time someone will do the same for us some day. Praise God and Thank a Vet!

Wednesday, November 21

by, Vicki

A Mother's Prayer

As parents we made sure that our children were taken to Sunday School, Church, VBS and all the other various church activities, so it has been difficult to see them "forget" about church or put church attendance on the back burner. I am saying church attendance because I know they both still hold their Christian beliefs. I know that in times of struggle or turmoil they do turn to their faith to help them weather the storms of life. BUT - as a mother I want them to have a church family as a support system too. So I decided to try praying for one adult child at a time. I would work on one and see what happened, and then really concentrate on the other child. I began this prayer campaign last spring, praying that God would lead our daughter back to a church family. She has attended church sporadically since leaving home, but not "faithfully." Time has passed since I started this concentrated praying and my prayers seemed to take on a stronger approach early this Fall. I started using a little bit stronger phrases - "Dear God, I am praying about Kristin again! Please give her a good whack to shake her up and get her back to a church family." (*That's what I prayed - right or wrong.*) Beginning in early October, Kristin and her 4 year old daughter have begun attending Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Holland, MI. It's a mission church that meets in a Catholic Church/School Education Center. Jade, our granddaughter loves the chimes and the fact that she gets fish crackers during communion. She reminds her mom that Sunday morning is now time to stop for coffee and bagels and then on to church. I have been getting phone calls now and my daughter will say, "Mom, I actually feel bad about missing church on Sunday. I really like this church and I can't wait for you and Dad to visit so we can go to church together."

So my little prayer was probably very unorthodox, but so far my prayer campaign is beginning to work – now on to the next child - our son.

Dear God: Thank you for answering a mother's prayer. Please continue to let our children strengthen and grow in their Christian faith. Amen.

Thursday, November 22

by, Larry

What are you thankful for?

What does Thanksgiving mean to you? Or better still, for what are you thankful?

This time of year, almost everyone is asking that question. At best, this time of year is a time for reflection, both on what you did all year, and what is coming in the new year. I personally am grateful for many things. Probably, the one thing that most people will not "fess up" to is to be grateful for my church. Although my wife is my anchor in life, the person that keeps me going in a straight line, my church is my life raft. My church, is the calming influence in my life, in any life.

Why is that you say? If you think about all the trials and tribulations you have faced this year, what got you through them? Jesus has always said that he will not give you more than you can handle. Were you able to get through the year so far? If so, you did it with the help of our Savior, Jesus Christ. We are NEVER alone, even though sometimes we feel exactly like we are all alone in a sea of adversity. We must remember Jesus is always with us. If your list of things you are thankful for does not include the church and Jesus, try to envision what life would be like without this steadying influence. I am thankful for my family and most of all my wife. But I am so grateful that Jesus is a part of my life.

What does Thanksgiving mean to you? If you say turkey, cranberry sauce, mashed potatoes, and all those other things, you have really missed the big picture. What am I thankful for? I am thankful for an anchor in a sea of turmoil. I am thankful for having Jesus in my life because I know with him guiding me, I will never be alone and I can fight the good fight. He is the Salvation and the Rock. What are you thankful for?

Friday, November 23

by, Vicki

Quilts- Quilts-Quilts

Sleeping under a quilt is like sleeping under a blanket of love.

While attending Women's Fall Retreat at Fortune Lake Camp, the women got a sneak peek at some of the quilts for the Fine Arts/Quilt Auction. The work, the colors, and the patterns were beautiful and eye catching.

The theme of the Four Rivers Fall Cluster Day held recently was "A Life in Pieces." The theme centered on various quilt patterns, the history behind them, and placing our life in pieces before God. Pastor Gene Wickman, pastor of the host church in Pembine, was very familiar with quilting and the love and work that goes into making a quilt.

I thought about the family quilts that I have. I only have two, but they are very precious to me. The first one is a small quilt made by my paternal grandmother in a Nine Patch pattern. The squares are made from my father's shirts when he was a little boy. The fabric is faded and worn. It has warmed both myself and then our son. He thought it was very special that he had something from when his Gramps was a little boy. The other quilt actually belongs to my son too. It was made by my mom, his Gram. She thought he would use it to replace the tattered quilt, but that was not the case. It is newer, done in Amish colors and also in a block pattern. Both quilts were made with lots of love and have provided lots of comfort.

As Pastor Gene mentioned, the threads of the quilt hold it together and Jesus Christ is the thread that holds us together in love. Jesus puts the pieces back together when we need our life put back together.

Dear Lord, Bind us together with a strong thread of faith and love. Keep us warm and safe under your quilt of love. Amen.

Saturday, November 24

by, Larry

Family Time

Have you ever noticed some of the ads on television? Everything is now bigger, or faster, or easier to prepare. Instead of sitting down for dinner and talking to your parents or your children, everyone must inhale their dinners (faster & easier), and then take off in all sorts of directions. Why is that? What happened to the family hour, when kids would help prepare dinner and then sit and talk about their day to their parents? Are we so cell-phoned that we do not even know how to talk to a real person anymore?

Dinner at our house always took what seemed like now, forever. Why is that? We would sit around and discuss the trivial and mundane, but at least we were all together. The traditional Sunday dinner was really the highlight of the week. Relatives would come over and the actual dinner lasted for hours. You always knew you had made an impression on your girlfriend if she invited you over for Sunday dinner to meet the family, because basically she really meant you would meet the family! In some cases, this would mean anywhere from 12-15 people inspecting the new "boyfriend." Then the "visiting" would happen out in the living room. The ladies would stay in the kitchen – why I really do not know – and the "men" would retire to the TV area. (Yes, we had television back in the old days.) Then the sounds of life would start, which consisted mostly of loud snoring followed by the sounds of the "big game" on the TV. It seemed as if somehow the louder the snoring, the louder the TV would actually go. I could never figure out if or how the two were connected.

Family time was and should be a big deal. It should be a time when children and parents alike can express their thoughts without any accusations. Everything now is quicker and faster so the kids do not have to sit down for a long time with their parents. I, for one, would love to go back on occasion and just sit with my parents and talk again. Unfortunately, both of my parents have passed on. We should all take the time just to slow down and smell the roses, or the pot roast, or the pork roast.

Sunday dinner was also a time for manners. Every once in a while my mother would put an empty place setting at the table and tell us that Jesus was sitting there and we should be on our best behavior. (We were.) Do you have dinner with Jesus? Do you even say grace at your meals? We do. I am always grateful to be able to have dinner with my family, no matter what. Take time out of your schedule or schedule a meal with your family. You might find out some things you were not aware of. PRAY FAITHFULLY, God is always there, even at meal times.