

# Daily Devotions



## **Monday, 10/29/2018**      **Isaiah 53:4-12**

Too many times we allow our lives to be defined to ourselves and others by the things that we have done wrong. The past "sin" we recall could be a couple of minutes or even years ago. Once we allow our lives to be defined by failure, we then permit this error to define our relationship with God and our relationships with other people. We think that when God sees us, God only sees our failures. We also think that when other people see us, they automatically see our sins and our failures. In today's reading from Isaiah we are told that God does not define our relationship with God by our failure. God redefines our relationship with God through what Jesus did for us through his death and resurrection. This not only renews our relationship with God; it also renews our relationships with other people. *Loving God, thank you for sending Jesus into the world to live, to suffer, to die and to rise, to overcome our sins and failures. Help us to live in the new life that you give us through this precious gift. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

Josh Schunk, '04, Pastor, Zion Lutheran Church, Oelwein, Iowa

## **Tuesday, 10/30/2018**      **Psalms 91:9-16**

When we learn that God has redefined our relationship with God through the death and resurrection of Jesus, we also discover that we are called by the Holy Spirit to enjoy this newly restored relationship. We enjoy this relationship by making the Lord our refuge. This means that we run to the Lord when we are struggling in life because we know that God will take care of us. This also means that we turn to the Lord when life is going well because we know that God celebrates with us. Seeing the Lord as our refuge brings innumerable blessings into our lives. We can be confident that God hears us every time we call upon God's name, and answers each and every prayer. At the end of our lives in this world, we know there is something better waiting for us when we take our place in the presence of our Lord and Savior forever! *Good and gracious God, thank you for allowing us to take refuge in you. Help us to call upon your name in prayer, in praise and in thanksgiving each and every day and to live looking forward to that day when we will be with you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

Josh Schunk, '04, Pastor, Zion Lutheran Church, Oelwein, Iowa

## **Wednesday, 10/31/2018**      **Hebrews 5:1-10**

We know that we are not to look to ourselves for examples of what a perfect or renewed relationship with God should look like. When we do this, we tend to see our relationship with God in the same way that we see our relationships with other people--seeing only the brokenness and the ways those relationships fall short. Instead of looking to ourselves, we are called to look to Jesus--the only person who has ever had a perfect relationship with God. What does Jesus' relationship with God look like? Jesus' relationship with God is defined by perfect obedience and perfect trust. Since this relationship is the model for our relationship with God, Jesus also empowers us, through the Holy Spirit, to become obedient to and trusting of God. *Everlasting God, you brought Jesus into the world to be the model for us of what a relationship with you should look like. Help us, through your Holy Spirit, to follow the example of Jesus and to enjoy a relationship with you in which we have faith in you and do the work you call us to do in response to your grace. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

Josh Schunk, '04, Pastor, Zion Lutheran Church, Oelwein, Iowa

## **Thursday, 11/1/2018**      **Mark 10:35-45**

Reading about Jesus' disciples can be an act of great humility because, as is oftentimes the case, we see ourselves in them. They seem to do and say many of the same things that we would do and say. This is the case when it comes to James and John. They wanted to share in the glory of Jesus without sharing in the suffering of Jesus. How many of us, too, wouldn't prefer to share in the glory of Jesus without sharing in his suffering and death? As Christians, we know this is not possible. We are not able to enjoy the resurrection of Jesus without also going through the suffering and death of Jesus. We know that when we were baptized, we were united both to Jesus' death and to his resurrection. We also know that this baptism empowers us to enjoy the new relationship that God desires to have with every one of God's children. *Lord God of resurrection, thank you for bringing us from death to life in the waters of baptism. Help us to live in this new life each and every day. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

Josh Schunk, '04, Pastor, Zion Lutheran Church, Oelwein, Iowa

**Friday, 11/2/2018**

**"For the Beauty of the Earth," ELW 879**

*1 For the beauty of the earth,  
for the beauty of the skies,  
for the love which from our birth  
over and around us lies:*

*Refrain*

*Christ, our God, to thee we raise  
this our sacrifice of praise.*

*2 For the wonder of each hour  
of the day and of the night,  
hill and vale and tree and flow'r,  
sun and moon and stars of light: Refrain*

*3 For the joy of ear and eye,  
for the heart and mind's delight,  
for the mystic harmony  
linking sense to sound and sight: Refrain*

*4 For the joy of human love,  
brother, sister, parent, child,  
friends on earth and friends above;  
for all gentle thoughts and mild: Refrain*

*5 For each perfect gift of thine,  
peace on earth and joy in heav'n;  
for thyself, best gift divine,  
to our world so freely giv'n: Refrain*

This hymn illustrates two great postures of prayer. The first is to name gifts. Read it slowly or sing it a line at a time. Let the "beauty of the earth" evoke the names of all the creatures that amaze and astound you. Let the "wonder of each hour" call to mind the exquisite rhythm of the day and the beauty of sun and moon alike. Pause to pray for those who taught you the "joy of human love" and those with whom you share "gentle thoughts and mild." The second great posture of prayer is seeing and serving God in the sharing of God's gifts. God is both in and transcending these gifts; we release them in the surrender of gratitude and the sacrifice of service. It is a *Soli Deo Gloria*--"to God alone be the glory"--for all the gifts of God and most especially for the gift of God's very self in Jesus. *God, we praise you for all your gifts. Help us share them as freely as you give them. Amen.*

Paul Rohde, '82, Campus Pastor, Augustana University, Sioux Falls, S.D.

**Saturday, 11/3/2018 and Sunday, 11/4/2018 "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling," ELW 631**

*1 Love divine, all loves excelling,  
Joy of heav'n, to earth come down!  
Fix in us thy humble dwelling,  
all thy faithful mercies crown.  
Jesus, thou art all compassion,  
pure, unbounded love thou art;  
visit us with thy salvation,  
enter ev'ry trembling heart.*

*2 Breathe, oh, breathe thy loving Spirit  
into ev'ry troubled breast;  
let us all in thee inherit;  
let us find thy promised rest.  
Take away the love of sinning;*

*Alpha and Omega be;  
end of faith, as its beginning,  
set our hearts at liberty.*

*3 Come, Almighty, to deliver;  
let us all thy life receive;  
suddenly return, and never,  
nevermore thy temples leave.  
Thee we would be always blessing,  
serve thee as thy hosts above,  
pray, and praise thee without ceasing,  
glory in thy perfect love.*

*4 Finish then thy new creation,  
pure and spotless let us be;  
let us see thy great salvation  
perfectly restored in thee!  
Changed from glory into glory,  
till in heav'n we take our place,  
till we cast our crowns before thee,  
lost in wonder, love, and praise!*

Each of the readings for this week, like the words of Charles Wesley's great hymn, promise and extend the movement of God's love toward us. From the moment God comes to Adam's loneliness until the day Jesus gathers the children, we hear God "fix in us [God's] humble dwelling." "Humble dwelling" captures the awe of the psalmists gazing at the creation and the humility with which they recognize their own small place in the cosmos. The Bible insists that God breathes God's "loving Spirit" into the least and the lost, the lone and the last. This is good news for all of us together. Wesley's hymn also looks forward, anticipating our trust and belonging, our growing ever more secure until in wholehearted trust we are "lost in wonder, love and praise." We know mostly fleeting glimpses of God's great love, so we keep listening day in and day out to the loving grace that keeps us alive, together, and in Christ. *God, we praise you again today. Help us praise you again tomorrow. In faith, trust and love of one another, set our hearts at liberty. Amen.*  
Paul Rohde, '82, Campus Pastor, Augustana University, Sioux Falls, S.D.