

50 Years of Blessing, 50 Days of Prayer



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Sound the Trumpet!

Declare a Jubilee!

Let it be a time of remembering

God's care and

celebrating God's goodness.

Let it be a time of prayer.

September 12, 2004

Ephesians 1:7-8

“In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace that he lavished on us.”

Sometimes I think too small. I fail to live in the awareness of the greatness of God's mercy and forgiveness. We are all abundant receivers of God's love through the life, death and resurrection of Christ Jesus. I know that by the free gift of God's grace my sins are forgiven. But, like many others, I wrestle with what it means to truly release my daily life into the hands of a loving God. I am given a heart and mind to be used in a positive way as I seek to reflect God's love in all I do with my time and treasure. We are blessed with the riches of God's grace and as we give of our lives, those riches are lavished on others as well.

PRAYER:

Lord, I know that by your grace I have strength and guidance each day. Open the eyes of my spirit and my mind to truly rejoice in your grace and your goodness. Thank you Lord, for the grace given to me in such large measure. Guide my response to your love. In Jesus' name. Amen

- Pastor Russ Sorensen

“Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue, but with actions and in truth.”

It was early in 1960 when we first came to Our Saviour's. It was to be a trial Sunday. We had just moved here and had several churches to “check out”....We never got beyond OSLC. I still remember the welcome we received. Alberta and George Westby (Russ Westby's parents) were among those who were so very friendly and helpful...introducing us and welcoming us. Pastor Peterson preached a sermon we really liked...and we were “hooked”....We joined.....How God has blessed us and this church in the intervening years. We have received one fine pastor after another....the congregation has grown steadily (from 91 to 2700), the church buildings have more than quadrupled in size, and the programs offered have gone beyond anything we could have imagined.... Our church's outreach is exemplary. This could not have been accomplished without the presence and guidance of our God. We need to stop and think....

How easy it is to thank God for our DAILY blessings...But....how often do we stop to thank Him for the blessing of OSLC?...As we go into this 50th year celebration, may we thank him over and over again. And may our thanksgiving be accompanied with a renewed love in action.... Caring deeply for one another....giving of ourselves to others with the gifts God has given each of us...reaching out to those less fortunate... with prayers for all – especially those in need...known and unknown to us...

PRAYER:

Our dear heavenly Father, we thank you for your blessings throughout the years. As we look ahead, may we be aware of your continued presence and guidance. Help us to always be mindful of the needs of others and to reach out in love and action. In Jesus' holy name. Amen

- LaVerne Johnson

September 14, 2004

1 Timothy 1:15-16

From Paul to his young colleague/student in Ephesus:

"This is a true saying, and everyone should believe it; Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners - and I was the worst of them all. But that is why God had mercy on me, so that Christ Jesus could use me as a prime example of his great patience with even the worst sinners. Then others will realize that they, too, can believe in him and receive eternal life."

Without question the most powerful experience in our travels since retirement was the opportunity ten years ago to explore the excavated portions of the ancient seaport city of Ephesus. It was in this busy city, with its many visitors from all over the world, that a young Timothy struggled as leader and teacher of the Christian faith, which Paul, his mentor and friend, had taught him. In these verses Paul's encouraging words remind Timothy (and us likewise) of God's infinite patience for even the worst of us as we grow in our faith and strive to find our roll within the church, serving as examples to those who follow us. Strong Christian leadership is vital to a healthy church, and Our Saviour's has been most fortunate to have many faithful and capable leaders during its first fifty years. May it continue to be so in future generations of our faith community.

PRAYER:

Dear God of grace and mercy,

Thank you for the forgiveness of all our sins, big and small, that you offer to each of us every day. Open our hearts to the work of your Holy Spirit that we may feel the call to be leaders and teachers in service to you at Our Saviours. In Jesus' name, Amen

- Russ and Ann Westby

September 15, 2004

Luke 15:10

“In the same way, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God when one sinner changes his heart and life.”

Have you ever felt like your life is going on fast-forward? That's how I feel right now. I'm assuming that as of today, I'll have somehow survived my first twelve days of college; but as I write this, it's the middle of summer and I have no idea how I'm going to make it to Augustana alive! I have friends to hang out with, my family to spend time with, my room to clean, and a million more little things I need to accomplish. I even have homework to do before I can start school- not to mention the shopping, packing, and figuring out how to fit my entire life into half of a 10x12 dorm room!

The truth is, as exciting and fascinating as this adventure is, there's no way I can do it all alone. Maybe what I really need is a time-out to refocus myself on the One who'll help me manage my life. Although I'm hardly a repentant thief or murderer, maybe I, too, can “change my heart and life” by handing over my stress and busyness to God. Relying on Him to get me through will let me start this new phase of my life with strength and confidence. He's glad to help ease the pressure!

PRAYER:

Father, let me change my heart and life to focus on trusting You.

- Amy Keipert

“When he finds it (the lost sheep), he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’” [NIV]

The Parable of the Lost Sheep, one of the most familiar of Jesus’s stories, has a great deal of meaning for us at Our Saviours. Like the shepherd, we, as a congregation, search out to help those who are lost. We reach out through our worship services, both traditional and contemporary, through our youth programs, through our small groups and through the personal witness of our members. We also nurture and assist a broad group of people through the wide variety of programs and partnerships we sponsor.

But shepherding is only one aspect of the parable. Often times, it is much more difficult for us to acknowledge that we are the lost sheep, both as a congregation and as individuals. We get confused, torn, not sure which is the right direction to go. We focus on things right around us and lose sight of where it is we want to be going. And too often, when the shepherd approaches, we scurry away in fear...afraid to admit we don’t have everything under control.

But Jesus, the shepherd, seeks us out and finds us, even when we don’t realize we need to be found. If we let him, he lifts us and takes us in the direction we need to go.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, give us the strength to reach out and aid those who are lost and in need of help. And Lord, we ask you for the humility to admit that we are in desperate need of help and guidance in our own lives. Be with us and lead us in the direction we should go. Amen

- Michael Haupt

“...looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Anniversary

The first card came a couple days before their anniversary. It began, "As you celebrate your 40 years together...." Of course they knew it was 40 years, but seeing it in print on a card addressed to them brought about the reality! How could 40 years have gone by so quickly? What was the 'secret' to being married for this long? Couldn't some of these thoughts and questions also apply to us as we celebrate Our Saviour's 50th anniversary?

With Jesus as the head of the marriage and church, things become possible which would be impossible outside of his love. Even if things are not going well from a human point of view, we can be assured that Jesus is moving independently of these human considerations; his loving intervention is objective and by faith he can work miracles.

PRAYER:

Lord Jesus, thank you for being present in our lives. Amen

- Kay Ivarson

September 18, 2004

Philippians 3:13

“Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead.”

In a few months we will celebrate the 50th anniversary of Our Saviour's. From a small beginning of fewer than 100 adults, we have grown to a vibrant congregation of approximately 2,700 members serving our God in a variety of ways. We start by bringing our youngest members into God's kingdom through baptism and nurturing, and caring for oldest members and each generation in between.

God has blessed us with many dedicated lay leaders and pastors who have had the vision to lead onward and upward our quest to complete Christ's Mission. As Paul said, "Reach out and look to the future."

PRAYER

Gracious God, grant us the energy, motivations and resources to complete our Mission. You gave our life so that we might have life eternal. Now it is time for us to make our sacrifices. Amen

- Dick Cook

September 19, 2004

Romans 9:8

“... it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as descendants.”

PRAYER:

Lord, thank you for making me your child. Thank you for adopting me as a descendant into your family. Thank you for my baptism that washed me clean with your infinite forgiveness and melded me into this family of yours on earth. I need a family, Lord. So often, I feel alone and at odds with the world. I wonder who will be there for me, to speak for me, to answer for me ... to add to my voice ... to support me when times are hard. Lord, I have a family here in the people you have given me who are also yours. I cherish their friendship and their help. I treasure their support that is offered even when I am too proud to ask. Lord, thank you for making me a child of your promise ... your promise to forgive, to love and to save. Amen.

- Denise Parrello

September 20, 2004

Ecclesiastes 12:1a

“Remember your creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come, and the years draw near when you will say, ‘I have no pleasure in them.’ ”

A life without God would be a lonely hopeless one. Take time each day in your faith journey to know and love your creator, because a life centered on God will be a fulfilling one. Do not wait until times of trouble to know God instead rejoice in his love so that in these times you are comforted by the hope of eternal life.

As a child we are taught that Jesus loves us. As a youth we come to experience the depth of His unending love through spiritual growth in confirmation and as an adult we continue to be a student of the Bible continuing to grow in His Word.

PRAYER:

Dear Lord, Please guide us in our daily prayer so that we may better come to know you.
Amen

- Penny Harney

September 21, 2004

1 Timothy 4:12

“Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.”

Let the Children Dance

Sometimes babies cry in church, making it hard to concentrate. Sometimes small children make quite a commotion with their coloring books and markers. Sometimes children need to go to the bathroom, disrupting everyone in their row. Sometimes children like to dance, I could never do this in church. Sometimes teenagers dress funny and talk during church. Sometimes I wish children didn't disrupt our worship.

Sometimes I look at a baby sleeping in its mother's arms and I see unconditional love. Sometimes the small child in front of me smiles, waves and draws me a picture. Sometimes the children make me laugh when they catch the Pastor off guard during the children's sermon. Sometimes children like to dance, a wonderful expression of pure joy and faith. Sometimes the teenagers teach the small children, participate in projects to help others and even lead the worship. Sometimes I wish there were more children in church.

PRAYER:

Lord, thank you for our children. Help us to make our Church a place where the children feel welcome. Help us to see the example they are setting and give us the courage to dance. In Jesus name, Amen

- Craig Swanson

“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it”

Tumbling Up

In the novel *Great Expectations*, the main character meets a family whose children he observes “tumbling up.” He watches them literally tripping and falling, and figuratively growing older almost accidentally. Haphazard parenting may cause no physical harm, but the children suffer mightily without any real guidance. In this novel as in most of his work, Charles Dickens highlights the failings of parent and society in the raising of children.

Failings such as these may not be the sort of thing reported in the newspapers, but their impact on tomorrow’s adults is certainly as great. This verse from Proverbs speaks to this issue. As God’s people, we are called into service – some of us as parents. In that calling, we are charged to deliberate parenting, actually *raising* our children as opposed to letting them “tumble up.” We are called to be Christian parents, to be loving, careful, and purposeful in this precious responsibility.

PRAYER:

Dear God,

Be in my heart and in my words that my children might grow up to reflect your love.

Amen

- Sonja Meyer

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight.”

Her Name Means “Holy”

Santos Calel lives in an adobe house in Guatemala with four of her six children. A forty-five year old widow who never went to school, Santos has no income other than that she earns from her weaving. Daily meals consist of beans and rice and meat once a week.

Santos teaches me about hope and thankfulness and total dependence on God. Her conversations are filled with “¡Gracias a Dios!”—“Thanks to God!” Her dependence on and gratitude to God is so evident and complete.

No worries for Santos about whether her carpet is clean or her wardrobe is current; no thoughts for television or computers; no pressure to move up the career ladder. Santos lives totally in the grace of God, trusting in God’s loving care.

PRAYER:

Gracious God, thank you for those people who teach me how to fully trust your goodness. Help me to remember the promises you made at my baptism. Amen.

- Kathleen Morkert

September 24, 2004

Matthew 6:33

“Seek first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things will be added unto you.”

Looking for the Kingdom – now let’s see how would I do that? It’s so easy to find, as the Kingdom is right where we are! God has given us this free gift with no strings attached. All we have to do is “look” for it! Not an Easter egg hunt, but the free gift of Easter; a resurrected Christ who died for us that we might live eternally. And all we have to do is seek it FIRST - not after we play golf or go to the movie or the greatest sale of the century, but first above all other activities! And when we confess our Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior everything will be added! This verse was my father’s mantra. He lived it, shared it and experienced the rewards of a successful business and family life. His life and those of others who have found and shared Jesus as their personal Savior will be rewarded not only in this life but eternally in the life to come.

PRAYER:

Dear Lord, help us always to seek your Kingdom as we walk our earthly paths in service. As we share your good news with those around us, we ask for your blessings as you have promised. In Jesus’ name we ask this. Amen

- Liz McKay

September 25, 2004

Mark 9:37

“Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.”

I never tire of my children's awe-filled faces as we approach the altar for Holy Communion. The blessing that they receive is a consistent reminder of Christ in their lives. They leave with a spring in their step no adult dares to show – they are living the joy, the grace of Christ in our lives. Children are not the church of the future – they are the NOW of the church! When we hear the cry of an infant it is a voice rejoicing and when a young brother or sister in Christ asks “how much longer?” they are asking the eternal question of Christians – when will we be with you Lord? By welcoming – really welcoming – these children we not only help build a life long worship habit, but we open ourselves up to a richer brotherhood in Christ.

PRAYER:

Lord,

Make me an instrument of love and acceptance of all fellowship in Christ. Amen

- Patricia Murakami

September 26, 2004

Luke 16:29

“Abraham said 'Your brothers have Moses and the prophets to warn them; your brothers should listen to what they say'.”

Were you listening when your parents said “Be home by ten o'clock”, or “No, you can't go out on a date until you are sixteen”? Listening to what our parents said to us often fell on deaf ears. We were expanding our horizons, honing our skills, being “independent” - listening to what they had to say wasn't usually a top priority.

The rich man in our scripture lesson was pleading with Abraham to warn his brothers of his suffering in “this place of pain” so that they could change their way of living. His brothers needed to listen to the prophets and learn how to receive the gift of eternal life.

Have you learned the value of listening? Have you seen the spirit of God's love in the eyes of a cherished family member or friend telling you their faith story? What has given them the strength over the many challenges and joys they've experienced? Hold their hand, ask them to tell you - do it now - and listen to what they say.

PRAYER:

Lord, silence my tongue; open my ears; strengthen my eyes to the gifts to be learned by listening to your servants. Amen

- Shirley Garrison

September 27, 2004

Acts 2:17

“In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.”

Looking back, when we old were very young, the space travels of science fiction were pure fantasy. In short order, these dreams, visions, and prophetic writings became fact. Some people have now really walked on the moon and can live for long periods of time in outer space. God given talents of technology and science have fashioned wings for our bodies and our spirits to soar. Let not these marvels blind us to special human needs, though. We still seem incapable of following God's great command: "Love your neighbor as yourself".

PRAYER:

May some new prophets, visionaries, and dreamers teach us how to truly fulfill this commandment. Amen

- Calvin K. Claus

September 28, 2004

Nehemiah 8:10

“Now go home and have a feast. Share your food and wine with those who don’t have enough. Today is holy to our Lord so don’t be sad. The joy the Lord gives you will make you strong.”

Nehemiah’s age is not indicated but he was probably fairly old having been in exile for at least 12 years. He was a wine taster for the Persian king and thus greatly trusted. When the King noted his deep sadness and learned that it was because the walls and gates of Jerusalem were in ruins, he gave Nehemiah permission to return and rebuild them. Despite ridicule and plots against him, Nehemiah accomplished his mission. Other exiles returned when this was done. They gathered together and Ezra read the Law to them. His fervent reading brought tears to their eyes. Nehemiah, who loved the Law greatly, spoke the words above.

We can follow his advice even though we have not achieved what he did. Whatever our age or our accomplishments, we can take those words into our hearts.

PRAYER:

Lord, even though I keep getting older and less able to do things, let me remember that you will keep me strong. Amen

- Catherine Stahlman

“Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.”

I was touched and inspired by a sermon given by Pastor Russ Sorensen about envisioning the face and hand of God in the faces and hands of the rescue workers. I began to contemplate what it would be like to really enact the belief that your hands are the hands of God on earth. Perhaps a first vision is that of a woman's hands in white gloves, chastely holding a white Bible in church. Receiving God's word is certainly an essential step in knowing how your hands are to be used by God. But I believe that hands are called to action too. Do you believe this as well?

Look at your hands. What would you do with them if you truly saw them as the hands of God? Would you hold people's hands with more fervor as you pass the peace on Sunday? Would you pat more people on the back, embrace more, smooth a troubled brow? Would you grasp a hammer and build a house for Habitat for Humanity? Or fold receiving blankets for midwives in foreign lands? Perhaps cook casseroles for some kids with a sick mom? Or more dramatically, even find the courage to restrain an attacker on an airline flight?

I believe that we have all been given our talents for a reason, and that we are to share them. Thessalonians 5:11 exhorts us to "Encourage one another, build each other up." As I placed my hands on the shoulders of another and prayed during training in Healing Touch Spiritual Ministry, the teacher shook me up a bit when she instructed us to envision ourselves as the embodiment of the Holy Spirit, "like Jesus with skin on." It may seem ostentatious. But actually, in those special times when I feel I am just the vehicle of something much greater, it is tremendously humbling to try to use my hands as Jesus would. Make the time to do what God asks of you. You won't need a manicure to see the beauty of your helping hands, and you and those you serve will feel good. Isn't that what building others up is all about?

Do: Reacquaint yourself with your hands. Explore the texture, notice contours and wrinkles, feel the shape and temperature. Savor their uniqueness. Close your eyes and clasp your hands. Imagine God holding your hands.

Reflect: How does God's hand in my hand feel? How do my hands feel to others?

PRAYER:

Lord of life, thank you for creating me. Help me to recognize the gifts that you have given me. Lead me in the use of my hands and body in your service. Help me to make my touch the touch of love and embodiment of your holy spirit, today and always. Amen

- Jill Milner

September 30, 2004

1 Timothy 6:6-7

“But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.”

Passing the Gift

All we have on this earth is a gift from God. What do we do with our abundance - keep it all for ourselves, or pass it on?

The Heifer Project International has a special way of sharing gifts. They are dedicated to ending world hunger and caring for the earth by providing livestock, trees, training and other resources to help poor families around the globe become self reliant.

We here at Our Saviour's have been a part of that process by purchasing shares of animals for people we wish to gift at Christmas. Heifer International requires its recipients to “pass on the gift” by sharing offspring of their livestock with others in their community. What a wonderful way to be a good steward of God's gifts to us - passing on our gifts.

PRAYER:

Dear Lord, Help us to remember the source of our gifts, and to share by passing them on to others. Amen

- Marilyn Breiding

October 1, 2004

1 Timothy 6:12

“Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.”

Paul commands us to take action – to fight and to take hold. God calls us to eternal life – a gift offered to us through grace. Even so, we are told to *fight* for and *take hold* of this gift. Must we fight our way to heaven? Must we overcome conflicts with corruption, temptations, and evil? Apparently so, for it is a good fight for a good cause. We are to *take hold* of eternal life. Eternal life is worth the good fight of faith, and we are called to actively *hold on*, lest we lose our grip.

PRAYER:

Dear God, Please help me do my part to fight the good fight of faith and to take hold of the eternal life to which I have been called. In Jesus' name, Amen

- Rick Needham

October 2, 2004

1 Timothy 6:18-19

“They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous and ready to share, thus storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life that really is life.”

Upon reading these verses in Timothy the first thought that popped into my head was parents. After some 40 odd years, lots of protesting, and much eye rolling, I now realize that my parents were right about many things. Just watching how they live is a testimonial to these verses in Timothy. As adults, it is our responsibility to set up a life lived through the word of God, for all children. We learn these acts of faithfulness through our parents, the elderly or a significant adult in our lives.

God's blessings to the older population that has set a good example for our children's future. By working, sharing and learning with them we have been given another gift from God. Thanks to all of you, especially my parents, for steering us onto the right path to the Lord.

- Laura Mau

October 3, 2004

Psalm 122:1

“I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go to the House of the Lord.’”

Sacred Spaces, Sacred Faces

Christians throughout the centuries have built churches - from soaring Gothic cathedrals to simple country chapels to our own building in Arlington Heights - to create sacred spaces that glorify God and evoke his presence. Yet we know God's presence is not limited to a building; it's all around us. Where do you encounter God with gladness? Where are your "sacred spaces?"

I feel particularly close to God when I'm surrounded by nature. Whether canoeing in Minnesota's Boundary Waters or hiking in a national park, the beauty of the creation draws me to the Creator. I can also feel close to God in much more mundane circumstances. The dinner table, surrounded by family and friends, can be a sacred space because of the sacred faces there - God's gift of cherished loved ones. Even a homeless shelter can be a sacred space, with Christ's compassion manifest in the sacred faces of the volunteers and guests. Anyplace we encounter God with gladness can be a sacred place.

PRAYER:

Lord, fill us with gladness. Help us each day to feel your presence in the sacred spaces of our lives. Help us also to see your presence in the sacred faces of our lives, those with whom we are blessed and those we are called to serve. Amen

- Ken Westlake

October 4, 2004

Psalm 127:1

“Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city the watchmen stand guard in vain.”

God, the Master Builder

I'm always amazed how much time and effort it takes to create a building, yet how easily it is demolished. It seems even our most careful efforts are short-lived and of uncertain value.

Creating a building is exhaustive. It involves conceptualizing, working out tricky problems, careful planning, and ensuring that it is built well. Despite these efforts, it all comes down in a day.

I think of God as the Master Builder. All things, infinitely huge or infinitely small, were painstakingly created according to His designs. We break things down into smaller and smaller pieces or we look farther out into the Universe, but we can't find any end to it. Instead, there we see God, and the complexity, diversity and perfection of His Creation continues to reveal itself to our complete bewilderment.

PRAYER:

Lord, as I go about my work in this world, let it be your work that I do. Amen

- Keith Ginnodo

“...I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you...for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice (fear), but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.”

Reminders surround us—the scars of 9/11, war in Iraq, political and corporate corruption, murder, unemployment—the list goes on. We feel at risk, vulnerable and at times frozen with fear. All that is evil would have us remain in icy fear that we might be kept from our appointed mission/ministry. As Christians, however, we know that the Lord has not left us helpless amid the circumstances of life that seek to immobilize us.

To sustain us on our journey the Lord has provided gifts and tools—the Holy Spirit, God's abiding presence, and scripture's promises and exhortations to guide and encourage us—also the gifts of faith, prayer, relationship, community, etc.

Let us re-examine Psalm 23:4. *“Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me,”* and Psalm 46:1-3. *“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble...”* Indeed, the spirit we have received is not one of fear, but one of *power and love*. Thanks be to God!

PRAYER:

Lord, Jesus Christ, strengthen my faith, help me to receive and hold fast your gracious promises, then willingly follow where you lead, unafraid.

- Gayle Sittaro

October 6, 2004

Psalm 24:1

“The earth is the Lord’s, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it.”

Ever since I was a young child, I was fascinated with flipping a switch on a wall and bringing light to a dark room. Much of my professional career has been spent in engineering and manufacturing of high voltage electrical equipment. Electrons traveling along wires in the utility grid are invisible to us, and even if we do not understand the physical phenomenon, we are aware of the incredible energy that is present. Electricity lights our homes, starts our cars, powers our televisions. In some circumstances it can stop a heartbeat, or start it again.

Electricity always reminds me of God’s gifts to us. His power flows from heaven to us on earth, and He has given us dominion over His creation. Man has derived energy from the elements He put around us, be it rushing water, burning fuel or splitting atoms. That over which we have been given mastery can be put to good use or bad. Proper stewardship is simply our choice.

Our energy, our intellect, our wealth, our lives are all gifts given to us by God. Anyone who has seen a lightning bolt and heard the thunder realizes the devastation that can result when unbridled energy is released. Shared throughout a network however, the same energy has vastly improved the lives of countless millions across the globe. Together as God’s church, we are charged with harnessing the gifts He has given us, and using them for His greater glory.

PRAYER:

Jesus, Light of the World, teach me to give as I have received. Amen

- Joe Moninski

October 7, 2004

Hebrews 13:1-2

"Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it."

In 50 years of mission and ministry of Our Saviour's congregation, think of all the "angels" who have passed through our doors. There have been those who came with Sunday school friends, with confirmation youth. There have been international guests and missionaries linking us to Christ's mission to all the world. The littlest "angels" brought for baptism, and their families. There have been strangers "entertained" at funeral receptions, and those who have come to witness weddings. There have been those who came for health screenings, to give blood, to meet with counselors. We have hosted PADS guests and Gospel groups and Lutheran college choirs. And the "angels" of Our Saviour's have so graciously welcomed this Wisconsin pastor and her daughter. I am so grateful! Hospitality is the gracious welcome of others just as we have been welcomed in love by our gracious God.

The mission of Our Saviour's congregation to "make Christ known" happens through the many ways, great and small, that we open our hearts and our house to friends and neighbors and strangers alike. We give witness to Christ that all are welcome here.

PRAYER:

Gracious God, let mutual love flow, and extend your gracious welcome through us to others, in Jesus' name. Amen

- Pastor Gail Heidtke

“And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things have passed away.’ And he who sat upon the throne said, ‘Behold, I make all things new.’ ”

“I Make All Things New”

As I read through these familiar verses, I was transported back in time and place to 1967 in Cologne, Germany. I was a member of the Luther College Nordic Choir and we were touring Europe. One of the churches we visited was the Cologne Cathedral, a beautiful new structure. However, next to it was the shell of the old church which had been destroyed during the war. As we stood there taking in the significance of what we were seeing, we began to sing one of the songs on our concert program, “And I Heard a Great Voice”. I recall standing there with the other sixty-five members of the choir looking at the two buildings side by side, with tears streaming down our faces as we felt some of the pain of what was lost, but also experiencing God’s renewing grace depicted so graphically before us. How blessed we are to know that, even in the darkest times, God continues to make all things new.

PRAYER:

Gracious God, we thank you for all the many gifts you give us. Grant us the faith to live our lives with the assurance that you are with us through all the twists and turns of life, and that you continue to bless us with your grace that makes us new.

- by Diane Aumann

“May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.” (NRSV)

Harmony

When I was asked to prepare a devotion for the 50th anniversary, I was told that the weekly theme for this week was stewardship. But what do these verses have to do with stewardship? Doesn't stewardship involve giving of our money, time and talents?

These verses deal with the stewardship of our relationships with others, especially fellow Christians. Often, we celebrate our own faith while using the law to focus on the shortcomings of other Christians. But, in the eyes of God, aren't our sins as damning as the sins of others? Recognizing that we are all sinners, we should welcome one another in the knowledge that Christ has atoned for our sins. Is it not better to be good stewards of our relationships by celebrating the faith of other Christians while using the law as a guide so that we can deal with our own shortcomings?

PRAYER:

Let us join Paul in praying...

Dear Heavenly Father, grant us the ability to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, so that together we may with one voice glorify You, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Help us to welcome one another just as Christ has welcomed us, for the glory of God. Amen

- George Steil

“Praise the Lord!

Sing to the Lord a new song,

His praise in the assembly of the faithful.”

Our Saviour's has always been a congregation whose vitality in worship is evident every week, as the people of God gather to pray, to give thanks, to sing praise, to come to the Lord's table.

Just before Ash Wednesday of 1996, our new OSLC pipe organ traveled to us by train from Ontario, Canada. Its various pieces were carefully stored within the worship space, and for the next six weeks, we watched in awe as Mr. Gabriel Kney lovingly assembled the beautiful instrument he had created. On Easter Sunday that year, “Jesus Christ is Risen Today” was a indeed new song! The eight foot horizontal trumpet pipes proclaimed the Lord's resurrection and the surprising, glorious tones of the Zimbelstern stop rang out on the last verse with joy.

God makes all things new each week in worship. We bring our cares and concerns, our pressures and our pain, and give them to God, who comes to us in the power of liturgy and song.

PRAYER:

Dear Lord, we praise and thank you for the privilege of worship in this assembly of the faithful. Continue to be with the people of Our Saviour's, and help us always listen to new songs. Amen

- by Nancy Polancich

*"The Lord makes me powerful and strong; he has saved me."
(Good News Bible)*

In doing some preparation and research for this devotional, I learned a very interesting fact about Psalm 118. Falling where it does in our Bible, there are exactly 594 chapters before Psalms 118 and exactly 594 chapters after it. Isn't it interesting that being "central" to the Bible itself, the Psalm 118 brings us a message that is perhaps central to our strength and hope in the Lord?

Life as an imperfect person in this world is an unending battle between doubt and faith. Doubt creeps into our relationship with God such that we sometimes feel related to the Lord only in times of distress. Doubt manifests itself in our prayer life when we realize that prayer has become almost totally self-centered. Doubt hinders our service to God when we fear sharing the Gospel with others, because we don't know the "right words". Indeed, as a Christian we forever rely upon reminders in Scripture of God's perfect will for our lives.

Thus we are reminded:

*"The Lord is with me, I will not be afraid; what can anyone do to me?"
(118:6)*

*"Many enemies were around me; but I destroyed them by the power of the Lord!"
(118:10)*

and finally,

The Lord makes me powerful and strong; he has saved me. (118:14)

The strength and power of the Lord is sufficient for our lives and it is eternal. Of what should I have fear? Of what should I have doubt?

- Hans Stucki

"If we are faithless, he remains faithful -- for he cannot deny himself."

We often think of people without faith as "those others." You know the ones -- those who rarely, if ever, attend worship services, and who seem to have the singular notion that they and their desires are the center of the universe. "Those others" range from the daily panhandlers outside the train station to greedy executives and corporate raiders, from the schoolyard bully to the compulsive (gambler, drinker, fill-in-the-blank) guest on the afternoon talk shows.

But in Paul's second letter to Timothy, he says, "if we are faithless ..." As modern Christian readers, when are you and I faithless?

It's those times of trouble when things unfortunately don't improve, but worsen. It's not the original catastrophe that erodes our faith, but the delays, diversions and denials, or the endless suffering or loneliness. Continuing frustration can transform to despair and hopelessness, leaving us feeling there's nowhere or no one to whom we can turn. When we have forgotten to turn to God, we have suddenly become "those others" without faith.

But all is not lost. Paul tells Timothy (and us) that "[Jesus] remains faithful -- for he cannot deny himself." We are created in God's image, and his love is eternal.

PRAYER:

When I'm weary, down and out, on the street,
When evening falls so hard,
Please comfort me; be on my side.
When times get rough, and pain is all around,
Be my bridge over troubled water.
Amen

- Mark McClenathan

October 13, 2004

Ecclesiastes 9:11

One more thing I have observed here under the sun: speed does not win the race nor strength the battle. Bread does not belong to the wise, nor wealth to the intelligent, nor success to the skillful; time and chance to govern all. (The New English Bible)

Oh my! What a jolt to judgment! Skill, speed, strength, wisdom, intellect – are these not the major paths to accomplishment? Not quite! Here's how time and chance governed my beginning. WHO would be my parents? WHEN, WHERE and HOW would I be delivered from my mother's womb? WHAT gender, culture, mother tongue and religion (if any) would be my lot? Each of God's human creations faces these eight fixative factors at birth. We can never subtract from them! Only additions take us beyond what is fixed. I offer a prayer of thanksgiving for all those who have been additives in my life. Pray forgiveness for those who have been shaped to harm others.

- Calvin Claus

October 14, 2004

Psalm 111:1

“Hallelujah! I want to express publicly before his people my heartfelt thanks to God for his mighty miracles. All who are thankful should ponder them with me”. (The Living Bible)

It's the little things .

As I thought and prayed about this verse one thought kept coming to me. We see God's miracles all around us. The very fact that you wake up in the morning, can read this page and experience the day are all small reminders of God's great love. We often look for miracles in big things, whirlwinds, burning bushes and pillars of fire. How often do we look for the quiet miracles? We are all so busy and it sounds so cliché to say “Slow down, take a look around you at the beauty God intended us to enjoy every day.” Remember it's the little things!

PRAYER:

God keep me from being so busy that I miss the splendor you have created for me. Help me to see you in all the little things. Amen

- Kathie Gannegan

October 15, 2004

Psalm 34:2-3

My soul shall boast in the Lord; the humble shall hear it and rejoice.

It's easy to "boast in the Lord" when you attend worship at Our Saviour's. Our traditional services are filled with great music, our contemporary service rocks and our children's choirs are so sweet-voiced the saints nudge their kids in heaven saying, "See. You could sound like that too, if you'd practice."

Consistently the congregation cites music and worship as sources of pride and delight. The music, the sermon, the liturgy are all instruments of grace, but they cease being so when I slip into the role of audience member instead of awe-inspired member.

PRAYER:

Please Lord, remind me to humble my heart particularly in worship, so that I am able to receive all the blessings you intend. Amen

- Gayle Banakis

October 16, 2004

Hebrews 10:25

“Not neglecting to meet together, as in the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”

Time to Worship

I begin my day of worship with a special mug that says "each new day brings a new way to praise the Lord!"

As I drive to church, I anticipate worship time with God and other believers. I am not disappointed. The greeters give me welcoming smiles and warm handshakes. I feel God's presence in this place, Our Saviour's Lutheran Church. Before the service begins, I read a prayer, page 47, from the green hymnal book before worship. We worship in song and prayer. The "Word" is spoken here and unites us. Through the bread and wine we are forgiven and renewed. And when Pastor Morkert starts to sing from the pulpit, he is transformed and becomes Abraham or Moses for us.

PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, may we all be enriched as part of our worship experience. Amen

- Joyce Cozak

October 17, 2004

2 Timothy 3:14

“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it.”

“Everything in life happens for a reason.” I heard my Grandmother speak these words countless times as I grew up. I have to admit that I hated these words as a teenager not knowing what possible reason there could be for whatever injustice had occurred that day. As I recall these words 25 years later, I can look back at my life and I can see that during the worst times in my life, the Lord has been working. When doors have shut in my life unexpectedly, new ones have opened that have lead to more blessings than I could have ever imagined. The Lord has rescued me. Even knowing all he has done in my life, I still find myself facing times when my faith is challenged. Recently, dealing with a close friend’s diagnosis of breast cancer at the same time her husband had been laid off from his job, has been a test of my faith. My friend is only 38 years old with three young children. I have asked God so often, “Why her?” I have even been angry at the Lord. Through it all though, a community of family and friends have come together to support this family. The outpouring of generosity has been overwhelming, reminding me again that the Lord is ever present.

PRAYER:

Dear God,

I pray that I will continue to study and learn your word. Please help me to develop a deep rooted faith that will continue through all of life’s challenges. I especially think today of those going through troubled times when their faith is challenged. Allow good to be seen in even the worst of times. Amen

- Laurel Van Meveren

October 18, 2004

2 Timothy 2:1-2

“In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in the view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word: be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage – with great patience and careful instruction”

Here the apostle Paul calls on Timothy to proclaim the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Many of us view the phrase “Preach the Word” as directed to our pastors in the pulpit on Sundays. Certainly it is that but it is also a call for each of us and the Church as a whole to look outward and to minister to the growing number of those most in need. Need knows no season. We must be ready at all times to proclaim the gospel and to encourage those most in need. Social Ministry requires this great patience and careful action.

Paul reminds us that we are proclaiming the gospel in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus. I am reminded of a song that I learned years ago in Sunday school – “And They Will Know We are Christians by Our Love.” We share God’s love for us with others through our social ministry programs by preaching God’s love, not only through our words, but also through our actions. Through our presence with the hungry, the homeless and the less fortunate we make the presence of Jesus Christ known.

- Eric Draut

"As for you, always be steady, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry."

Focus

Merriam-Webster's dictionary defines evangelism as, "the winning or revival of personal commitments to Christ." To win or revive one's commitment to Christ takes effort. This effort requires time, patience, endurance, and persistence. In today's microwave world and digital hyper-speeds, patience, endurance, and persistence are not qualities that are always valued in people, but are very necessary for sustaining relationships with each other and with our God. And so, we ask our Lord to help us nurture the skills and develop the focus that will allow us to "do the work of the evangelist".

I believe that in all our hearts if we focus on our commitment to God, our personal ministry will become clear. And so, we ask, Lord, that you show each of us how to take the time to listen to your words, to listen to our hearts, to engage our minds and focus on our ministry. Listening, learning, and then doing will allow the love that our Lord gives to each of us, to in turn share our gifts with others.

- Mark C. Germano

“Now He (Jesus) was telling them a parable, to show that at all times they should pray and not to lose heart.”

This is the intro line to Jesus' parable of the “persistent widow.” Jesus is stressing in this parable the Godly quality of persistence in prayer.

The judge did not render justice out of respect for God or even compassion for the oppressed. Yet the widow never gave up. Every morning she was first in line at his bench. Every evening she waited for him at the door pleading her case. Finally her persistence paid off. The Greek word translated, “brothers,” means literally to “wear me out.”

Prayer is not a one-hundred-yard dash, one flashy and fast effort. Rather, Christ shows us that it is more like a marathon of slow and steady petitions. In fact, he invites us to “bother” Him with our requests. To keep asking...to keep seeking...to keep knocking (*see Matthew 7:7*). Or as Paul put it, to “pray without ceasing.” (*1 Thessalonians 5:17*)

Why does He desire our persistent prayers? Because persistence in prayer is the hallmark of faith. That is what He is really after. Without faith, prayer is little more than a lucky rabbit's foot that we rub and wonder, “Is it working?” When we pray like that, and an answer finally comes, we're amazed. Faithful people, however, pray fervently and believingly, no matter what. Faithful people never give up on God. His answers to prayer are merely confirmation of God's unflinching faithfulness.

PRAYER:

Gracious Lord and Savior, you have brought us to a year of jubilee, fifty years in your service. Grant us grace and faith to be persistent in our beseeching You for help in making Christ known in this community and throughout the world. Help us to respond to the Gospel, so that we may be instruments who bring healing, justice and wholeness to all people and communities. We ask it in Jesus name. Amen

- Pastor Bob Furreboe

October 21, 2004

Micah 6:8

*“He has told you, O mortal, what is good;
and what does the Lord require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?”*

What does the Lord require of me? The verses preceding this one suggest possibilities: “burnt offerings? ... my firstborn?” No, God responds; nothing that extreme. God requires only justice, only kindness. Yet even these are in short supply: My cupboards overflow while millions go hungry. The homeless wander the streets while I renovate my spare room. I snap at my kid and my spouse. But justice and mercy aren't simply ideals to hope for; they're God's requirement. I am blessed with privilege and plenty. Let me use these gifts today to bring justice and kindness to the lives of others, and let me walk humbly with my God.

PRAYER:

Lord, thank you for the opportunity to spread your love and mercy. Help me treat others with justice and kindness, and walk humbly in my relationship with you. Amen

- Betty J. Birner

October 22, 2004

Matthew 28:19-20

“Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Our ministry reaches around the world as we are present in countless places sharing the Gospel and bringing hope through the Lutheran World Federation. Lutheran churches in Africa have grown by 50% since 1996! (In North America, Lutheran church membership has declined by 1.7 % during that same time.) We support the education of pastors and lay evangelists in Africa who are sharing the Good News with many who are hearing about Jesus for the first time. Together with our brothers and sisters in the African churches, we are obeying this commandment to Go! Teach! Baptize!

PRAYER:

Gracious God, thank you for making your Word known around the world. Keep all your children safe this day. Amen

- Kathy Magnus

October 23, 2004

Galatians 6:9

“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.”

When we dedicate ourselves to serving God by helping others, we can become overwhelmed by the enormity of the task. We know we can't satisfy all the hunger in the world, clothe and shelter all the homeless, be an advocate for all powerless people, and lift the spirits of every hopeless person, but our faith urges us on. Every small difference we make is pleasing to God.

PRAYER:

Heavenly Father,

When I feel too discouraged to offer one more hour of precious time, one more dollar, or one more smile or prayer for those in need, sustain me with your Holy Spirit. You have called me by name to be the arms and legs of Christ, turning convictions into action. Father, thank you for commissioning me to do your work and showing me the face of Jesus in everyone I serve. Amen

- Sue Katte

October 24, 2004

Luke 6:38

“Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap”. (NIV)

Giving is not a one way street. Giving takes two – a giver and a receiver. The giver needs to give with no expectation of reward and the receiver needs to be open to whatever gift is presented. But there is even more to it than that. When we become a giver or a receiver we build a relationship with the other person. We allow ourselves to be vulnerable, to trust and to say, “We’re in this together.” Giving is really about a deepening of faith. Jesus promised us a gift greater than any other, if we are open to receiving. And, we can give back our wealth and talents, not out of obligation, but because we want to deepen our relationship with Jesus and are willing to open ourselves up to the vulnerabilities and possibilities that allow us to grow in faith. One way streets are limited, but two-way streets get you where you need to go.

PRAYER:

Dear God, our provider, allow us to enter into a deeper relationship with you by letting us give of ourselves and the things that we most care about. Let us remember the blessings that await us by entering into this deep relationship of give and take. Allow us today to give with joy and to receive with joy. Amen

- Linda Falotico

October 25, 2004

Galatians 6:2

“Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”

This Bible verse conjures up lists of people who have graciously reached out to me in times of need. And hence, God has provided me with a deep desire to help others. But something unexpected has been happening--the more I reach out to help, the more I find myself being blessed! Now, that’s not the way it’s supposed to work, is it?

I’m going to tell you the most astounding thing that I’ve ever received back from someone: I have gotten to see the twinkle in the eye of a homeless man! Talk about blessed? I feel certain that I am the one who received the blessing that day.

PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, please provide opportunities in which we can share our love with one another. Nudge us, even out of our comfort zone, so that we may be a blessing to others. In Jesus’ name, Amen

- Joanne Monaghan

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day – and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.”

The End...The Beginning

As the apostle Paul was being held captive in a Roman prison, he realized that death drew near. Paul wrote to his son Timothy, who had a true heart for God. Paul's dying "desire" was to have Timothy realize his God-given potential and continue his ministry of the gospel. Paul's teachings, way of life, and purpose reflected God's love, patience and endurance. Paul wanted Timothy to commit to his faith in Christ Jesus and preach the Word of God to all that surrounded him.

As Paul "fought a good fight," he endured many persecutions – physical, emotional and spiritual. Despite the hardships and sufferings, Paul's relentless faith allowed him to "finish the race," i.e. complete his lifetime service to God. Because of his faith and commitment, Paul envisioned that the Lord God would show favor up on him, and all others that believe in him, on that last day. Everyone that "longed for his appearing" (believed and acknowledged the truth of God) would be blessed with eternal life.

PRAYER:

Dear Heavenly Father,
Like the apostle Paul, may each of us be enriched with a holy life. May we be motivated to act faithfully in our daily lives by honoring and serving our Lord God, who will reward us with everlasting life. Amen

- Cali R. Lelle

October 27, 2004

Psalm 46:10

"Be still and know I am God."

I tend to fill every possible minute with things I feel need to be done. Sometimes these are things like lesson plans or paying bills on time. Even as I do these jobs I am well aware that there are everyday things that are every bit as important, but tend to be overlooked. Evening walks with my husband and long "chats" with my children are treasured times that I very deliberately carve out of my day, no matter what else is going on. This time to connect keeps us close; if we stop for a while because other things come up our relationships suffer until we spend that quality time together again.

I am constantly amazed that I do this same thing so often to God. If I carve out time each day to pray, to read "Upper Room" or the Morning Prayer sent out through church on the Internet I am so much more connected to God. I see things the way He means for me to see them and I don't get upset so easily. So often the lesson I read in that 5 minutes is EXACTLY the answer to a problem I have been praying about. Each time this happens I am sure I will NEVER forget again to carve out this special time with God, but I forget again and again as I get wrapped up in daily responsibilities.

"Be still." Taking time to listen for God's guidance is a lesson I am constantly learning. Each time I relearn it I am amazed at God's grace at forgiving me and setting me on the right path...again.

- Lin Carvell

October 28, 2004

Micah 6:8

“He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”

Doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly, wow those are pretty idealistic phrases aren't they, Lord? Do you really mean I have to care about justice of everybody? I have a neighbor who leaves trash out for days, weeks, even months at times. Am I supposed to love him, show kindness, and be humble on top of it all when I am miffed at him?

I wonder if I am the one who is poorer when I don't live in ways that are just, kind or humble. When my attitude goes against your will, I cannot be a beacon for Jesus' light to others. I cannot even find my own way because I have lost my bearings.

I am thankful you told me to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly, Lord. I would never do these on my own. I am too selfish to do it on my own. I need your help to keep these priorities.

PRAYER:

Dear Lord, thank you for caring about me so much that you ask me to keep check on my attitudes and actions. Help me to act in just, kind, and humble ways. I feel safe in your love. Amen.

- Sheryl Kelso

“And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything you may share abundantly in every good work.”

Celebrations

Fifty-year celebrations are special. This year Our Saviours celebrates its fifty-year anniversary and there is much to celebrate. While we celebrate the past we must also look forward. With God's guidance, our church will celebrate its 100th birthday.

Through our Lord's grace, Our Saviours has grown in many ways during the last fifty years. Our programs are meaningful, enriching, helpful and Gospel based. We praise Him for our blessings. The vision that the founders had of Our Saviours and prayed for five decades ago has evolved into a vibrant, strong congregation.

We must continue to grow this community of God's children. During the next fifty years, that will be the challenge of our church. Meeting this challenge will demand visionary study, thoughtful decisions and joyous support of the congregation. The result will translate into action. When the centenary birthday of Our Saviours is celebrated, God's people will again witness the riches that God provided.

PRAYER:

Dear Lord God,

We thank you for our many blessings over the past 50 years. Help us as we dedicate ourselves to you. Let us pledge our resources as we continue to grow as a congregation in the next 50 years. We pray in the name of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen

- Chuck and Norma Doering

October 30, 2004

John 8:32

“And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

At times, we find it difficult to tell the truth, for fear of the consequences that may come. Sometimes, we may even begin to buy into our lies, wishing that they were our actualities. But regardless of how believable our stories may be, the truth is just a page turn away. It's like holding the key to your own shackles of guilt, and yet, not being able to reach the lock. No matter how hard you try, nothing comes undone until the cover is pulled back. Just when you think that all hope is lost, you catch the slightest glimpse of the end and you reach the key, along with the realization of what's been in front of you all along. All that's needed to cast aside the iron and steel of false words, is the melody of reality that only you can produce. Once we are willing to admit to our flaws, the truth becomes our Jaws of Life, the truth will set us free, and the truth is the word of the Lord.

PRAYER:

Dear Lord, although we may stumble throughout our days, tripping over our fallacies, you reach out and give us a crutch of honesty. Lord, be with us today as we take the steps needed to turn around our lives and help us to strive for an honest relationship with you. In your name we pray, Amen

- Shannon Swanson

“For by grace you have been saved by faith, and this is not of your own doing; it is the gift of God not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.”

Sound the Trumpet – A Jubilee Year

This is the last of fifty devotions by which we celebrate fifty years of ministry at Our Saviour's. The theme of our anniversary is “Sound the Trumpet - A Jubilee Year”. In the Old Testament, every fiftieth year was special. It was a year of Jubilee – a year of celebration. These days at Our Saviour's, we are celebrating our Jubilee year. We are reminded of fifty years of worship, education and missions. How should we observe this Jubilee? Certainly we should celebrate. The whole congregation should take part in the special events that remind us of our past. But also, we should make plans for many more years of service.

God has blessed this congregation with strong ministry, faithful people and abundant resources. Over the years, we have received the gift of faith. We have made it our way of life. In our Jubilee year, let us celebrate God's gifts to us.

PRAYER:

Thank you God, for the gifts that we have received from you. Bless our congregation—its Pastors and its people. Make it strong to serve You now and in the years to come. In Jesus' Name, Amen

- by Arnold E. Lack