

*Summer Devotions*  
*2009*



*Mount Olive Lutheran Church*  
*Anoka, MN*

## ***Welcome***

Welcome to the Summer Devotion Book for 2009. The devotions included have been written for weekend worship for individuals and families who are camping, on the road, on vacation or away at a cabin. Each devotion is based on the Scriptures and theme of the weekend worship at Mount Olive Lutheran Church, Anoka. Our prayer is that each devotion will awaken your awareness of the presence of Christ no matter where you may be. No message is more important than the message that takes us to the cross and empty grave of Jesus Christ. There we are confronted with our brokenness, our sin and our greatest need. It is there where God offers His hope, His joy, His love, His grace that changes everything!

## ***Worship and Word***

What follows is a suggested 'order of service' as you set apart time for this devotion.

- Relax:** Before you start take a minute to pause, relax and quietly ask God to prepare you to meet Him in this time of devotion.
- Read:** Ask one or two people to read the two Scripture Readings assigned for that devotion.
- Then have someone read the Key Verse and the Devotion for the day.
- Reflect:** Take a few minutes to discuss the devotion. What strikes you? What would you add? What questions do you have? Do you see any applications to your life?
- Request:** Invite someone to read the Closing Prayer. You may want to add personal and family prayer requests at this time. Take time to thank God for who He is and His gifts you are enjoying.
- Respond:** Take a moment to consider the Application Activity. Put it into practice!

## ***Work and Witness***

In John 13:17 Jesus said, "*Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.*" In Matthew 7:24-27, Jesus also illustrated that the wise person is the one who hears His words and puts them into practice. That

*May 24, 2009*

**Series: 'How Do I Look?'**  
***"Looking for the Solution"***

**Scripture Readings:**

**Romans 3:19-26**  
**John 16:5-15**

***"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation;  
the old has gone, the new has come!"***  
(2 Corinthians 5:17)

Agree or disagree: The world is a mess. If you are not sure, watch 30 minutes of a world news broadcast, read the front page of a local newspaper or listen to a three minute news report on the radio. You don't even have to look that far to find a mess. Most of us can find a mess in our neighborhoods, our family, our marriage, and our own hearts. Just in case you aren't convinced, do a slow read of Romans 1:18-32 and 3:9-20. Ouch! Life is a mess. If you want to do an investigation of how the whole mess got started take a look at Genesis 3:1-19.

The world is a mess. That is a fact. The big question is: What is the solution? How do we clean up this mess? Throughout history people have usually proposed one of six solutions to the mess we are in. A number of people say the answer is a political answer. Change the laws and you will see the mess gets cleaned up! Others claim the solution is education. The problem is ignorance, change what people know and we will clean up the mess we are in. Still others propose the answer is money. If we just change what people have – teach them to earn, to save, to budget and the mess will clear up. Then there are those who would say the answer is psychological. We need to change how people feel about themselves. If people don't feel like a mess they will become a part of the solution! Others suggest the solution is sociological. Restructure society, change the way people relate to each other and we will clean up the mess. And then there are some who tell us the solution is biological. We just need the right pill or the right procedure and we could clean up this mess.

*(continued on next page)*

## *May 24 (continued)*

While there is something to be said for each one of those suggested solutions, the solution to the mess we are in is not changing something “out there.” The solution is “in here.” By “in here” I mean ‘in our hearts.’ A changed heart makes for a changed person who can change a family who can change a neighborhood who can change a community who can change the world. That means the first mess to be cleaned up is the mess in you and in me. Only God is able to bring about that kind of change. And only God has a solution for the mess we are in.

At the root of the mess we are in is an ‘s’ word we may be so familiar with we have forgotten the mess it makes. That ‘s’ word is sin. At its root, sin centers around two problems: selfishness and separation. Sin infects every human heart and puts us at odds with God and one another. Change the heart and we can change the world. That is exactly what God set out to do when He mapped out His plan and sent His Son Jesus Christ into the world. In His words and life Jesus shows us what the solution looks like. And when He went to the cross, He took upon himself our mess – our selfishness and our separation from God. He took our place. He died for our sin. And He rose from the dead to clean up our mess. He forgives our every sin. When we repent of our sin and believe in Him, He changes our hearts. He comes and lives in us. He then commissions us to carry the message of what He has done for us to a messy world. He will work with us and clean up the world one changed heart at a time!

**Closing Prayer:** Heavenly Father, you see the mess I am and the mess I have made. Thank You for sending Jesus. Come, Lord Jesus, clean and change my heart. Use me to tell others of the solution You are to the mess we have made. In Jesus’ name, Amen. (Add personal and family requests.)

**Application Activity:** Read 2 Corinthians 5:16-21. Is there a mess in one of your relationships? Is there someone you need to seek reconciliation with? Seek that person out this week. Make a phone call, send an email, make a visit and start the clean up.

*May 31, 2009*

**Series: 'How Do I Look?'**  
***"How Should I Live in This World?"***  
**DAY OF PENTECOST**

**Scripture Readings:**

**Acts 2:1-21**  
**John 15:26-27; 16:4-11**

***"Come, follow me," Jesus said.***  
(Matthew 4:19)

"How do I look?" Not 'how do I look on the outside', but 'how do I look' from the inside. How we look is our 'worldview.' A worldview is the set of beliefs we build our lives on. In this series we have asked these questions: 1) Why does it matter what I believe? 2) How do I know what is true? 3) Where did I come from? 4) How did the world get so messed up? 5) What's the solution?

Last week we discovered the solution to the mess the world is in is not a change in laws or education or how we feel. As helpful as those changes may be, it does not address the heart of the problem. And the heart of the problem is the problem of the heart. In the flesh and blood of Jesus, God stepped into our world. In His life He did not get mired in the mess we are in. That is until He went to the cross and took our mess upon Himself. He died. He rose. He ascended to the Father's right hand. He is the solution to the problem of the heart. He now descends to us in His Word and Spirit to clean the mess within us. The key verse last week is music to every sinner's ear: *"If anyone is in Christ, he/she is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"* (2 Corinthians 5:17)

The question this weekend is: Now what? With the "old" of sin and guilt and shame gone how do we live as a "new creation"? The answer to this question starts with our response to the invitation Jesus made to His first disciples, *"Come, follow me."* So what does it look like to follow Jesus into your every day life?

What follows is a sort of 'Top Ten List' of what it looks like to live like Jesus. Rather than a long explanation for each, I will provide a brief definition, then a word from Jesus and then a

*(continued on next page)*

## May 31 (continued)

question to consider. To live like Jesus means to live with **discernment**. Discernment means you think before you accept. John 7:24, *“Stop judging my mere appearances, and make a right judgment.”* How do you judge whether something is the truth or just a passing fad? **Integrity** is walking your talk. Matthew 5:13, *“You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again?”* Salt is a preservative and a seasoning. What is the connection between salt and integrity? **Humility** is dependence on God. Matthew 5:3, *“Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”* What does it mean to depend on God? **Simplicity** is living by the motto: ‘Less is more.’ Matthew 12:15, *“A man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”* How is simplicity counter-cultural? **Faith** is confidence in God. Mark 9:23, *“Everything is possible for him who believes.”* Why is the greatest sin unbelief?

The first of the top ten have to do with your relationship with God. What follows Jesus applies to our relationship with people. **Hospitality** is love with hands and feet on it. Matthew 25:40, *“Whatever you did for the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.”* Give three examples of practical love for others. **Civility** is how God wants you to act toward people who disagree with you. Matthew 7:12, *“In everything you do, do to others what you would have them do to you.”* How does civility shape how we treat people we disagree with? **Charity** is selfless love. Matthew 5:44, *“Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”* Why is this a most Christlike love? **Generosity** is the love to give. Luke 6:38, *“Give and it will be given to you ... for with the measure you use it will be measured to you.”* How does generosity break the grip of greed? **Priority** means putting first things first. Matthew 6:33, *“Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well.”* What are the greatest challenges in your life to keep the Lord first?

**Closing Prayer:** Jesus, help me to follow you. Take your top ten list and help me apply it to my life. (Add personal and family requests.)

**Application Activity:** Discuss and decide which of Jesus’ top ten is your greatest challenge. Memorize the words of Jesus that apply to that challenge.

*June 7, 2009*

**Series: 'A Touch of the Master's Hand'  
"The Heart of The Servant"**

**Scripture Readings:**

**Colossians 1:2-6  
Matthew 25:34-40**

Very few people intentionally stop serving God and caring for others - it just happens. Sometimes it happens because we lose sight of how serving and caring touches us. Serving others is a great way of reducing stress and forgetting about our own problems.

A seminary professor once told our class the story of being a pastor in a church in New Jersey. The church was holding special evangelistic meetings. This pastor got a late start from home, and then, wouldn't you know it, he got caught in a traffic snarl on the Jersey Turnpike.

After waiting for more than a few impatient minutes in the "tie-up" he saw the cause. Someone had stopped on the side of the road with a flat tire.

"I thought for a moment about helping, but I was already late for my meeting."

When he arrived at the church a sizable crowd had already gathered. Stress levels begin to grow in the pastor's heart as the speaker of the evening had not yet arrived. The organist played the strains of the prelude and the pastor led an impromptu song fest. Finally the speaker arrived.

*"I was worried! I thought you'd forgotten!"*

*"No, I didn't forget,"* came the reply, *"I had a flat tire on the Turnpike without a lug wrench, but no one would stop to help."*

*"I never said a word."*

## *June 7 (continued)*

*“Then the righteous will answer Him,  
“Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed you,  
or thirsty and give you something to drink?”  
(Matthew 25:37)*

**Closing Prayer:** Lord, help me to recognize and seize opportunities to be your servant. (Add personal and family requests.)

**Application Activity:** Keep your eyes open this week and surprise someone with a ‘random act of kindness.’

**Caring come from the heart of a servant.**

*June 14, 2009*

**Series: 'A Touch Of The Master's Hand'  
"Dealing With Our Attitudes."**

**Scripture Readings:**

**1 Corinthians 12:31- 13:13  
Matthew 5:38-48**

Read: Jonah 4:1-11

Most of us remember Jonah as the guy in the belly of the big fish, but Jonah might be termed, "the evangelist with the bad attitude." Jonah was in the belly of the big fish through an effort to escape the call of God.

When the big fish vomited Jonah onto the Assyrian shores, somewhat reluctantly he proclaimed the word of the Lord. The "stomach-acid bleached, fish smelling" prophet made quite an impact on Ninevah. The entire population of this evil city repented.

When Jonah saw how God saved his enemies, he was angry. "Lord, I knew you'd do that! That's why I ran!"

God created us to love our enemies. Don't turn down the grace of God nor deny it to another. When we believe God's grace for ourselves and for our enemies, we really live.

**Closing Prayer:** Lord, help me to be honest about my attitude, to understand Your gracious nature and to be willing to live or die for the right cause. Amen. (Add personal and family requests.)

**Application Activity:** Who will you pray for today who is far from God? Pause now and say that prayer.

**God's grace is sufficient for you and your  
neighbors—and enemies.**

*June 21, 2009*

**Series: 'VBS Special' "Crocodile Dock "**  
**"God is..."**

**Scripture Readings:**

**Exodus 3:1—4:17**  
**Matthew 28:5-6,20**

***God answered, "I will be with you. And this will be the proof that I sent you: When you bring the people out of Egypt, all of you will worship God on this mountain."***  
*(Exodus 3:12)*

God sometimes does some amazing things to get our attention. In the reading from Exodus, we read that Moses was minding his own business tending sheep and behold God spoke to Moses in a burning bush that did not burn up.

God had heard the cry of the people of Israel and was ready to send them a leader to rescue them from bondage and slavery. Moses was his man! Unfortunately Moses wasn't so sure. The task ahead was a hard job with many risks. Besides who would listen to an old shepherd and follow him?

God knew that Moses was His man for the job. He took on Moses' excuses and objections and said simply – "*I will be with you*". He told Moses who He was – "I Am, the God of your forefathers of Abraham Isaac and Jacob". When Moses finally realized that it was God who chose him, he worshiped and obeyed by faith.

There may be times that God is trying to get our attention. It may be a still small voice or a loud noise. I think many times we get so busy and distracted with things in life that we think are important that we don't hear him calling. Or maybe we hear him calling but come up with many excuses ... "Not me God...not now God... there must be someone else."

May we take time today to hear God speak to us. Take time to just stop, look and listen. To Stop, and just be with God.

*(continued on next page)*

## *June 21 (continued)*

To Look, for God in everyday settings of life. To Listen, to where he may be leading you. Remember who He is ... "I am" Jesus tells us in the New Testament who He is... "I Am the Way, the Truth and the Life." Trust in Him. Don't be afraid. He will lead and guide right beside you. That is a promise.

**Closing Prayer:** Dear God, thank you that you are with us no matter what. Keep our eyes and ears open to see and hear you calling. Help us to do the jobs that you have called us to do and to trust in you for your love and care for us. In Jesus' Name, Amen. (Add personal and family requests.)

**Application Activity:** Take some time right now to be only Holy Ground. Yes, take off your shoes (Exodus 3:5) and listen to God in prayer and song. Find a song that you can just be with God and worship him.

*June 28, 2009*

**Series: 'The Touch of the Master's Hand'  
"A Course in Compassion"**

**Scripture Readings:**

**2 Kings 4:1-7  
Mark 6:30-44**

***"When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd,  
He had compassion on them,  
because they were like sheep without a shepherd."  
(Mark 6:34a)***

It is 8:30 PM. It was an extra long day at work. It was extra long not only in hours but also in stress. You are glad to finally be home. As you reflect on the haven of your home, a good friend calls. You can tell by his voice something is wrong. Before you can ask he asks, "Can we meet for coffee?" Reluctantly you agree. An hour later you are sitting across the table from each other. After a moment of quiet your friend gathers his courage to confess he lost his job of 24 years, he is deep in debt and he doesn't know what to do.

What do you do? Besides feeling stunned and overwhelmed, what do you do? Excuse yourself to the restroom and duck out the back door? Call 911? Hand them the business card of a local employment agency?

In the Bible reading from Mark chapter six, the disciples of Jesus find themselves in a similar situation. They are excited but exhausted. They just returned from a mission trip. They preached. They cast out demons. They healed the sick. Excited and exhausted Jesus invites them to *"Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest."* They jump into a boat to get away only to be faced moments later with more people with more needs. They spend the entire day with this crowd of 5,000+. The day is nearly over, they urge Jesus to dismiss the crowd so they can get themselves something to eat. Instead He assigns them the task of feeding crowd before dismissing them.

*(continued on next page)*

## *June 28 (continued)*

What do they do? Excuse themselves? Call Kentucky Fried Chicken or Jimmy John's for a quick delivery? Fortunately Jesus is present. His compassion will not let Him send the crowd away hungry. He uses what is available and works the only miracle that is recorded in all four gospels and He teaches the disciples a lesson they never forget. Put yourself in the sandals of the disciples and reread Mark 6:30-44.

Jesus here gives us an on-the-job lesson on how to show compassion. Compassion grows in our hearts when we spend time with our compassionate Lord. Take Jesus up on His offer in Mark 6:31. Get away with Him. Rest. Open His Word. Listen. Entrust your cares to Him. As you watch Him and listen to Him, your compassion for people will grow. You will feel what He felt – see verse 34. To show compassion you don't have to have all the answers. Just use what you have – your two ears. Listen. Ask questions. Affirm. Open yourself up to their pain. Pray. Pray as they share. Pray with them when the time is right. As you do you will see Jesus multiply your efforts just like He multiplied the fishes and loaves. When Jesus multiplies your efforts  $1+1=12!$

**Closing Prayer:** Lord Jesus, give me Your eyes and Your heart. Help me to trust that You can use me to care for those in need. Amen. (Add personal and family requests.)

**Application Activity:** In the next 24 hours send an email, a card, make a phone call or visit someone you know is facing a challenge.

*July 5, 2009*

**Series: 'Patriotic'**  
**"I Pledge Allegiance"**

**Scripture Readings:**

**Romans 13:1-7**  
**Matthew 5:13-16**

***"You are the salt of the earth ... You are the light of the world."***  
(Matthew 5:13, 16)

*"Oh, say can you see by the dawn's early light.  
What so proudly we hailed ...*

*"O beautiful for spacious skies, for amber waves of grain ...  
America! America! God ...*

*"My country 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing ...  
"I pledge allegiance, to the flag of the ...*

I can rarely sing or recite those words without a chill running up my spine or a tear trickling down my cheek and a surge of patriotism filling my soul. I am so grateful for the United States of America. While the USA is far from a perfect nation and we have our fair share of social ills and economic challenges – we enjoy a life, liberty and happiness few others have known.

This weekend we celebrate the *'life, liberty and happiness'* this country seeks to afford every citizen. We give thanks for the tens of thousands who serve, risk and many who have given their lives so that we can enjoy this free land. But as much as it is a privilege to be citizens of this great nation, there is a citizenship that holds even greater promise. While we, as Americans, pledge our allegiance to the United States of America, there is a pledge that holds a higher and greater allegiance – our allegiance to the kingdom of God and our President-King, the Lord Jesus Christ. He served. He risked His life. He gave His life. Jesus is how God shed His grace on us to guarantee *life* that is eternal and full to ALL who believe. Jesus secures *liberty* from sin's mastery and hell's torment. And Jesus implants a *happiness* that cannot be spoiled by disappointment or loss.

*(continued on next page)*

## *July 5 (continued)*

It is the *life, liberty and happiness* given by Jesus Christ that transforms us into the kind of citizens needed in the United States. Jesus describes the result of the transformation this way, *“You are the salt of the earth ... You are the light of the world ... let your light so shine before men that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”* (Matthew 5:13-16) Salt preserves. Salt seasons. Light exposes. Light illuminates. Think for a moment how that applies to being a citizen of the United States.

There are at least four applications. First, **pray**. 1 Timothy 2:1-2, *“I urge, then, first of all that requests, prayers, intercessions and thanksgiving be made for everyone – for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness.”* Prayer is the most potent way we can season and be a preservative in our country. Second, **vote**. During the voting season learn the issues, get to know the candidates and vote your values. This is a great way to provide seasoning and light in our culture. And third, **get involved**. Get involved in a cause you feel deeply about. Getting involved is a direct way to bring the light and salt of Jesus into our country. Get involved by joining a protest that preserves life, the family and demands justice for all. Get involved by contacting the president or those who represent you on the local, state and national level of government. Let your voice be heard. Fourth, **say thank you**. Don't just contact your governing authority to complain (they get enough of that), contact them to say 'thank you for what you do for us.' Take time to thank a veteran for his/her service to our country. Let someone you know who is serving in the military know that you cover them with your prayers.

**Closing Prayer:** Lord Jesus, thank you for the life, liberty and happiness You purchased for us. Thank you for all we enjoy in the United States of America. Guide our leaders. Protect our military. Use us and this country as salt and light in the world. Amen. (Add personal and family requests.)

**Application Activity:** Take 10 minutes and write a handwritten note of thanks to someone you know who is serving our country in the military or local, state or national government.

*July 12, 2009*

**Series: 'Be Rich'  
"How Rich You Are"**

**Scripture Readings:**

**Ephesians 1:3-14  
Mark 5:24b-34**

***"...He chose us... that we should be the praise of His Glory,  
who first trusted In Christ...."***  
(Ephesians 1:1,12)

I remember when I was young, picking teams to play ball. We would pass a bat between two leaders and they would put their fist over the other until they reached the top of the bat. The one who cupped the end would choose first. The agony came when I was chosen last.

The blessings from God is the good news for us in Christ. In the game of Life, He has chosen us...before the foundation of the world. He didn't pass a wooden bat around ...it was a wooden cross and he took it on in order that we would be saved. In this payment for our sins we are adopted into his family and will receive the inheritance.

In the inheritance He has accepted us. (verse 6) We didn't choose God. In fact there is nothing we can do to get right with God. The truth is we continue to sin and cannot get right with God on our own. But by His Mercy, we are His beloved or His be-graced people.

He has redeemed us. Literally set us free and forgiven us by paying the price. The price was His blood. We are His sons and daughters, we are rich!

The inheritance is, we are now connected forever to Himself. It is for our salvation. Yes some things in life are valuable. This is priceless. In HIS Spirit we now live life and live it to the fullest.

*(continued on next page)*

## *July 12 (continued)*

**Closing Prayer:** Lord we thank and praise You, for Your goodness endures forever. You chose us and we are Yours. Fill each of us with Your Holy Spirit to see the riches that You have for us in our daily lives. May we take time to stop look and listen for You. Amen. (Add personal and family requests.)

**Application Activity:** What excites you most about God's relationship to you?

*July 19, 2009*

**Series: 'Be Rich'**  
**"From Rags To Riches"**

**Scripture Readings:**

**Ephesians 2:11-22**  
**Mark 6:1-6**

Rio Bravo, Mexico: Shopping for souvenirs I heard the incessant call of the filthy child street merchant, *"Two for one nickel, Mister! Two for one nickel, Mister!"*

Admiring the industrious, hard-working insistence of this child (we could learn some lessons), I reached into my pocket looking for change with which to pay for the small boxes of Chicklets gum. I didn't have a nickel, but I had a couple of dimes. Engaging the child Chicklets merchant, I held out a dime. *"Two for one dime! Two for one dime!"*

Seeing the smaller dime, and obviously not aware of our currency the reply came, *"No, no, no, two for one nickel, Mister!"*

We had a great laugh at this snaff-oo of language and currency. I got a couple of nickels from my father-in-law. *"Two for one nickel. Two for one nickel, Ok!"* as I gave him two nickels together with my two dimes for four boxes of Chicklets.

I have often thought about that incident. How often are we like that with God? He stands ready to give us more than we deserve or ask for, but in our ignorance we settle for something so much less than what we might otherwise have.

**Closing Prayer:** Lord, prepare our hearts and minds to receive all that You have for us. (Add personal and family requests.)

**Application Activity:** Take two minutes and brainstorm a list of how God has blessed you.

*"Where did this man get these things?" they asked,  
"What's this wisdom that has been given Him...?"*

Mark 6:2

*July 26, 2009*

**Series: 'Be Rich'**  
**"How To Get Your Hands On Your Wealth."**

**Scripture Readings:**

**Ephesians 3:14-21**  
**Mark 6:7-13**

What does a six-year-old boy want for his birthday? Legos. A bicycle. Thomas the Train. A DVD of a recent movie that he will watch repeatedly. If he made a list, it would go well beyond this. But what if he could get *more* than this? What if he could get *immeasurably* more than he could ask or imagine?

When Gabriel Hurles turned six, that's exactly what he got. The little boy was so focused on eating his cake, that he hardly noticed the giant package in the corner of the room. When another child pointed out the large gift, Gabriel ran over and began to tear off the wrapping. It wasn't a bicycle or any of the other items a six-year-old would want. It was his dad, Army Specialist Casey Hurles, home on leave from the war in Iraq. Gabriel and his father had been apart for seven months, so when Casey learned his leave would coincide with his son's birthday, he hatched a plan to offer one whale of a surprise.

*"I pray that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through His spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all of the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge - that you may be filled to the measure of all of the fullness of God."* Ephesians 4:17-21

**Closing Prayer:** Lord, give me wisdom to know and experience the depths of Your love in Christ Jesus. You have sent Him to me. Amen. (Add personal and family requests.)

**Application Activity:** Take some time to finish this sentence, "Lord, I praise You for..."

## *August 2, 2009*

**Series: 'Be Rich'**  
***"The Dividends Of Sharing Wealth."***

**Scripture Readings:**

**Ephesians 4:1-16**  
**Mark 6:30-34**

You *can* have it all. You can work harder, play harder, and multitask your way to squeezing 31 hours of activity into a 24-hour day. That's the finding of a study conducted by the American Management Association.

The study concluded that people can add almost 50 percent more activity to a typical day of 16 waking hours. Similarly, according to U.S. Labor Department figures, the average yearly increase in U.S. workers' productivity has doubled from 1.5 percent during the period from 1987–1996 to 3 percent from 1997–2006.

But at what price?

Through technology, people are accomplishing more in less time, but they are feeling overwhelmed by the multiplicity of their lives, according to Ed Reilly, CEO of the AMA. "There's a sense of fatigue that comes from multitasking," he says. "You can force yourself to keep doing things, but you may not be as effective."

*"Come with Me by yourselves to a quiet place  
and get some rest."*  
(Mark 6:31)

**Closing Prayer:** God, help me, without guilt or anxiety, to enjoy my summer leisure. But help me also to take some time to spend some time with You. Amen. (Add personal and family requests.)

**Application Activity:** Treat yourself to a nap today.

*August 9, 2009*

**Series: 'Be Rich'  
"Put on Your New Wardrobe "**

**Scripture Readings:**

**Ephesians 4:17-5:2  
John 6:1-15**

***"... put off your old self ...  
be made new in the attitude of your mind ...  
and put on the new self ...."***  
(Ephesians 4:22-24)

Warren Wiersbe in his commentary on Ephesians restates the passage above this way: *"Take off the grave clothes and put on grace clothes."* That is a wonderful description of the two very different lifestyles compared in Ephesians 4:17-5:2.

In the six short chapters of the apostle Paul's letter to the believers in Ephesus, the Holy Spirit inspires him to describe the difference Christ makes globally and personally. In the first three chapters Paul unrolls God's master plan for the universe from one "end" of eternity to the other. We might call Ephesians chapters one through three 'God's Because.' A powerful summary of His global plan is recorded in 1:9-10. *"And He made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment – to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ."* God's master plan applied personally is described like this in 2:4-5, *"But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive in Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved."*

On the heels of 'God's Because' in Ephesians 1-3 we cross into 'The Believer's Therefore' in Ephesians 4-6. If you are on the receiving end of God's mercy and you are saved by His grace and alive in Christ, God's because enacts a believer's therefore. Here is just a flavor of what I mean. Ephesians 4:1, *"As a prisoner of the Lord, then I urge you to ..."* 4:17, *"So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must ..."*

*(continued on next page)*

## *August 9 (continued)*

4:25, “Therefore each of you must ...” 5:1, “Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children ...” 5:17, “Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is ....”

Because of what God has done for us (Ephesians 1-3) therefore we are changed (Ephesians 4-6). The key passage for today, Ephesians 4:22-24, articulates the heart of that change. We experience a change of wardrobe from the inside out. **Off** with the grave clothes – the mindset and lifestyle of one who is separate from God and dead in relationship to Him; and **on** with the grace clothes – the mindset and lifestyle of one who is connected to God and alive in Christ. Ephesians 4:17-5:2 describes in detail what grave clothes must be put off and what grace clothes must be put on. Do a reread of 4:17-5:2 and catalogue a list of what must be put off and what to put on.

Grave Clothes to Put Off

Grace Clothes to Put On

**Closing Prayer:** Almighty God, merciful Father, out of Your kindness You gave Your Son to raise from death to life. Remove my grave clothes and dress me in Your grace. Make it evident to all that I am alive in You. In Jesus’ Name, Amen. (Add personal and family requests.)

**Application Activity:** Based on Ephesians 4:17-5:2, identify one pair of grave clothes you need to put off and the grace clothes to put on. Now ask God to help you stay dressed in grace!

*August 16, 2009*

**Series: 'Be Rich'**  
**"Lifestyles of the Truly Rich "**

**Scripture Readings:**

**Ephesians 5:3-21**  
**John 6:24-35**

***"For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.  
Live as children of light."  
(Ephesians 5:8)***

When God wants us to understand something He often uses word pictures. Word pictures help us "see" what God means. The key word picture in Ephesians 5:3-21 is the contrast between light and darkness. The contrast of light and darkness was one of Jesus' favorite word pictures. Here are a couple of examples. John 3:19-21, *"This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of the light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God."* And John 8:12, *"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."*

It is no surprise then that the Holy Spirit inspires Paul in Ephesians 5:3-21 to use the clash of light and darkness to contrast the lifestyle of those who follow the Light of the world and those who refuse. The clash of light and darkness shines from the passage of Ephesians 5:3-21. For this devotion lets focus on the light that shines from the lives of those who were once darkness but now are light in the Lord.

Among the many beams of light that shine from this passage we will look at three. First do a quick read of Ephesians 5:18b. There is only one way the light will shine from our lives: *"Be filled with the Spirit."* The Holy Spirit is the power that makes Jesus the light, shine into us and through us. *"Be filled"* is in the passive voice and present tense. That means the Spirit fills us continually. At the waters of baptism, the moment faith was created in our hearts the light began to shine. Daily ask the Spirit to keep filling you.

## *August 16 (continued)*

As the Spirit fills us, three of the light beams that shine from us are (Ephesians 5:19-21) joy, gratitude and submission. The **joy** (5:19) given by the Holy Spirit is not like a thermometer, climbing higher or dropping lower depending on your circumstances. Instead, the joy given by the Holy Spirit is like a thermostat. Instead of rising and falling with circumstances, it determines your spiritual temperature (attitude) no matter the circumstances (see also Philippians 4:11-13; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18). This joy flows from the completed work of Jesus on the cross!

**Gratitude** (5:20) comes from the same root word as grace. When the Holy Spirit fills us we experience God's grace and we are filled with gratitude. A grateful attitude brings light to the face. Thankful people are happy people. Gratitude is the antidote to whining. Think for just a moment of all that you have to be thankful for ... turn that into a prayer and thank God for all He has given you.

**Submission** (5:21) is not a very popular word. But my guess is your favorite people in the world are submissive people. They are your favorite people not because they are willing to be your doormat, but because they are the people who show a genuine interest in you. They are eager listeners. They love you and want what is best for you. They serve you, encourage you, and put your interests above their own. A home filled with submissive people is a happy home. A workplace filled with submissive people is a productive workplace. A sports team filled with submissive people is a championship team. Jesus used the word servant to describe what submission looks like in action. (See Matthew 20:25-28.) Once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Let the beams of joy, gratitude and submission shine!

**Closing Prayer:** Lord, fill me with Your Holy Spirit. Let joy, gratitude and submission shine from my life. In Jesus' Name, Amen. (Add personal and family requests.)

**Application Activity:** Who will you serve today? How?

*August 23, 2009*

**Series: 'Be Rich'  
"Heaven in Your Home"**

**Scripture Readings:**

**Ephesians 5:18-33  
John 6:41-51**

***"...Instead, be filled with the Spirit ... Always thank God the Father for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.  
(Ephesians 5:18b,20)***

Is your home governed by God's Word? I think it is important to understand what this word govern means. To be governed by something or someone means to have them administer or preside over. If a machine has a governor, it is limited to what the governor will allow... a control that maintains a steady speed in a machine (as by controlling the supply of fuel) [syn. It keeps the motor in check.]

God's Word needs to be the governor in our lives and in our homes. It begins with the Holy Spirit and the power that we have to live daily. It is in the Power of the Word that husbands and wives can live in harmony with each other and their children and employers and employees and neighbors. This unity comes only from the Power of the Holy Spirit and infused to us by His Word. The power of the Spirit builds a faith trust in Christ as Savior. It showers on us Joy, Thankfulness and Submissiveness.

The home environment is filled with Joy. This is more than an emotion – but a deep experience of confidence in spite of the circumstances that stand in the way. The center of this Joy is Jesus.

When a home lives in thankfulness to God for all things, they center it on Jesus. It is a thankfulness that becomes a grateful (grace) heart that appreciates and praises the One who gives and supplies all.

*(continued on next page)*

## *August 23 (continued)*

Submissiveness – The word is quickly interpreted as negative – but when we put the focus on Christ it becomes the source of how we live in our homes in all relationships.

When the Word of God is governed in the home daily, then the Spirit of God works to build a home filled with a joyful, thankful, and submissive atmosphere.

This home sounds like heaven on earth. It is! Governed by His spirit we give Jesus praise, honor and glory. In Christ we live now and forever.

**Closing Prayer:** Lord Jesus, fill us with Your Spirit. Open Your Word to enlighten our lives, and to keep our hearts and faith in one true faith in Christ Jesus, now on earth and one day forever in heaven. Amen. (Add personal and family requests.)

**Application Activity:** What are the goals of a Christian home and marriage? How do you live the joy, thankfulness and submissiveness In Christ?

*August 30, 2009*

**Series: 'Be Rich'  
"Beware of Hostile Buyouts "**

**Scripture Readings:**

**Ephesians 6:10-20  
John 6:51-58**

***"Be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power."***  
(Ephesians 6:10)

Not since the depression of the 1930's have we faced economic challenges like today. Bankruptcy, foreclosures, buy-outs, lay-offs, wage-cuts...it is all too real and all too dismal. Some of you reading this know first hand the pain of these economic times. In spite of the pain, I hear people talking about the good coming out of these hard times. Trimming the fat from spending is forcing people to grab on to what really matters – relationships, faith, getting rid of "stuff" and having time with people who matter.

When we reach the closing chapter and verses of Paul's letter to the Ephesians he explains a similar dynamic, though it may seem to have little to do with your job, mortgage or the economy. The Holy Spirit inspires Paul to give us a sort of x-ray vision to see the invisible forces around us. These forces are known for their hostile buyouts of the spiritual lives of people. They are known to leave people in spiritual and eternal bankruptcy. To withstand these hostile attempts to empty out our souls Paul urges us, *"Be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes."*

The hostile force we face is the devil and his cohorts. While some dismiss the existence of the devil and demons, one look at the pain, misery, immorality and violence in the world shouts otherwise. Peter warns, *"Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."* (1 Peter 5:8) And a hostile buyout of your soul is his primary aim.

*(continued on next page)*

## *August 30 (continued)*

To fight off the enemy's attempt to force us into spiritual and eternal bankruptcy the Holy Spirit hands us the *"full armor of God."* First He hands us the **belt of truth**. The belt of truth is the truth of God as revealed in His written Word (the Old Testament and New Testament) and the Word made flesh (Jesus Christ). The belt of truth helps us to quickly detect the deceptive lies of the enemy.

Second, He puts on us the **breastplate of righteousness**. The name devil means 'accuser.' Without the breastplate of the righteousness of Christ (see 2 Corinthians 5:21) we would be justly accused and condemned to eternal bankruptcy. But Jesus provides our bailout! He takes our sin and He is accused and condemned for us!

Third we are equipped with **feet fitted with the readiness of the gospel of peace**. Now we are backed by peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. When our feet are fit with the readiness of the gospel we are agents of God's bailout.

Fourth, take up the **shield of faith**. We are not at the mercy of the enemy's flaming darts of doubt and discouragement. Our eyes fasten on to God's promises, God's power, God's faithfulness, God's steadfast love. The **helmet of salvation** assures us we will not be bought out! The enemy will be crushed! The cross and empty grave of Jesus say so!

Finally we take in hand the **sword of the Spirit**, the Word of God. His Word renews and sharpens our minds. As we put His Word into practice we lay bear the lies of the enemy.

In verses 18-20, Paul instructs us to put on full armor of God with prayer. *"Be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints."* Pray not only for yourself, pray for one another!

**Closing Prayer:** Lord, fit me with Your full armor. Protect me from attempts of the devil to bankrupt my soul. Keep me alert and praying for all. In Jesus' Name, Amen. (Add personal and family requests.)

**Application Activity:** Make a prayer list. Identify people you believe are battling a hostile buy-out in their spiritual life, family life or work life. Take some time now to pray for each person listed.

# September 6, 2009

## Series: "Faith" "Faith That Works"

**Scripture Readings:**

**James 2:14-18  
John 6:60-69**

*"What we see, and like to see, is cure and change. But what we do not see and do not want to see is care: the participation in the pain, the solidarity in the suffering, the sharing in the experience of brokenness. And still, cure without care is as dehumanizing as a gift given with a cold heart."*

Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Out of Solitude* (Ave Maria Press, 2008), pp. 35-36

This Labor Day weekend is a time when we celebrate the accomplishments of labor, and celebrate "one last hooray" of summer, at least in Minnesota. May we also take some time to reflect upon the work that we are called to do for the Lord by reaching out to humanity.

We are "saved by grace through faith, and this not of works..." (Ephesians 2:8-9) but recognizing the great love of God - He loved us first, we are called to show His love and grace by being the salt and light He says that we are.

James 2:18, *"But someone will say, 'You have faith: I have deeds.' Show me your faith with deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do."*

**Closing Prayer:** Lord, as I rest this weekend, and find my rest in You, help me not to rest from the deeds that should be generated from a heart of faith. Amen. (Add personal and family requests.)

**Application Activity:** What new 'habit' will you develop to feed your faith?