**St. John’s Windish Lutheran Church**

**MEDITATIONS FOR YOUTH AND ADULTS - September, 2017**

Friday, September 1, 2017

**God will not take away a life; he will devise plans so as not to keep an outcast banished**

**forever from his presence.**

2 Samuel 14:14

What an extraordinary promise! Banishment and exile were real and fearsome punishments in the time

of the ancient Israelites. What a blessing to be told that not only does God not want us to be banished

from his presence, but he himself will devise plans and paths by which we can be led back to him. God is

not only willing to welcome us back to his presence, he is pro-active in bringing us back. Few promises in scripture matter as much as this one; few can heal our hearts and our souls as this one can. But today’s verse

also forces us to recognize a difficult truth: often, it is we who exile ourselves from God’s presence. Because

of guilt or sin – feelings of fear or unworthiness—we choose to stay at a distance from God. For some of us,

it is difficult to accept love, even from God. But now we know: even while we remain apart from God, he not only waits for us to return, he creates plans by which we can come back to him. If you are at a distance from

God, look around you. Be open to seeing the people and the circumstances by which God might be beckoning you to come back to him. The signs are real. The paths are real. But it must be our choice to walk back toward God. A choice we can make today.

Saturday, September 2, 2017

**In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways,**

**but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son.**

Hebrews 1:1-2

At a time when our means of communication are changing constantly (telegrams and air mail have given way to smart-phones and Skype), it is interesting to think of how God changed his ways of communicating with humans. From thunder and lightning, floods and rainbows, plagues and ‘pass-overs,’ he turned to prophets and finally to

a son – a human who knew God so well that he could speak for him and become a reflection of God’s love.

In this case, the messenger is the message: love – pure love – and forgiveness, redemption, healing, and hope. *“Thank you, Creator God, for all of the messages embodied in the life, love, and teachings of Jesus. In any age and any place, the message is clear. We are loved. We are redeemed. We are reconciled to you. Thank you.”*

Sunday, September 3, .2017

**Now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again**

**to the weak and beggarly elemental spirits?**

Galatians 4:9

It is an old story, an old truth. People born in poverty, even if they become wealthy, have an ongoing fear

of being poor. Those who have experienced abuse often have difficulty trusting others, even if those people are loving and kind. If we grow up on the ‘wrong side of the tracks,’ we can find it difficult to believe that people respect us, even when we have college degrees, fine jobs, and professional success. In other words, many of us have baggage. We can be drawn to old ways of thinking and behaving, old and no-longer-true ways of looking at ourselves and the world. We can’t help being vulnerable in this way, but we can turn our thoughts, temptations, and insecurities over to God; to a God who knows us better than we know ourselves. *“In your mercy, Lord, touch my mind and my heart with your healing love. Take away the thoughts that limit me or obscure my vision of you. Take away my fears and feelings of unworthiness. Come to me and abide in me, that I might truly be a new creation, able to flourish in your love and live in your peace. Thank you.”*

Monday, September 4, 2017

**Jesus said to him, “Go home to your friends, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you,**

**and what mercy he has shown you.”**

Mark 5:19

“I was accepted at college!” “I got the job!” “He proposed-- we’re engaged!” “We’re going to have a baby!” “The doctor says I’m okay!” There are many times when we shout our joy out to others. We couldn’t keep

the good news to ourselves if we tried. That’s how God wants us to share the good news of what he is doing

in our lives. And no, we don’t have to stand at the corner of Broad and Main with a megaphone. God under-stands that most folks are terrified of speaking in public. What God does ask us to do is to acknowledge him;

to tell others what he has done for us and in us. That can be easier than we think, especially if we ask him to speak through us, and if we’re open to opportunities to speak about God. Today, at the bank, the teller told me about something strange that happened to her husband; one of those mysterious, spiritual encounters that don’t come from this world. I told her that I’ve experienced such things and believe very much that this world and the world of the spirit – God – intersect all the time. That launched us into a very gratifying, faith-sharing con-versation. (No one else was in line, so I wasn’t taking up her time.) Our conversation was like a spiritual oasis

in the middle of a busy day, and I know it left both of us refreshed and our faith strengthened. It isn’t hard to

“tell how much the Lord has done” for us. We only have to be willing.

Tuesday, September 5, 2017

**The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple.**

Psalm 119:130

Wisdom is not synonymous with complexity. Profound thoughts are not those that are merely difficult

to understand. On the contrary. The prophets and the psalmists wrote in simple words, they painted easy-

to-understand word-pictures, and they always understood that they were speaking to common people,

to people like you and me. Jesus was also known for his simple, clear speaking; for his parables that told

stories the people could understand. Fancy words don’t mean much by themselves. And scripture tells us

that God hears us and understands us even when we don’t have the words or the will to pray. At those times,

the Holy Spirit “intercedes for us with sighs too deep for longing.” The Spirit takes what is in our hearts and brings those feelings – those fears, desires, and hopes – to the gate of Heaven, to the presence of God.

And God hears. And he responds. It’s so simple.

Wednesday, September 6, 2017

**I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” And I said,**

**“Here I am. Send me!”**

Isaiah 6:8

American life is blessed by volunteerism. In Colonial days, when the French writer Alexis de Tocqueville

toured this new country, he observed that one of the most distinguishing characteristics of Americans is our willingness to help each other. It is as true now as it was in the 1700s. It is an even greater privilege when

we volunteer for God-- when we look around our church, our community, or our world and see needs that

have to be met and say, “Send me.” Or when we hear God’s still, small voice in our hearts and we know …

we just ***know*** … that he is calling to us. When we answer, “Here I am,” God’s heart leaps with gratitude.

Yes, God can be overwhelmed with gratitude when we show him our love and our willingness to serve.

Almost always, when God asks us to do something, when we know in our hearts that he is calling to us,

it is to something that will not only meet a need or be a blessing in the world, it will be something that

meets a need of ours and blesses us. Only God could have thought of such an arrangement.

Thursday, September 7, 2017

**Blessed are those who hear the word of God and obey it.**

Luke 11:28

Sometimes it’s easy to obey the word of God—to give a smile or a helping hand, to say something kind or encouraging. At other times, it is more difficult, perhaps even wrenching, to obey. That can happen when that inner voice, or our own certainty, tells us to change jobs, end a relationship, move to another city to provide care for a parent. At times like that, obedience comes at a price. But the return payment to us, if we can call it that,

is a kind of blessing we feel in our hearts and souls. Whether our obedience is of the ordinary, everyday variety or the once-in-a-lifetime, major sacrifice variety, we can be sure that our obedience will be blessed with the

peace of knowing that we are obeying the word and the calling of God. It is a peace that nothing else can bring.

Friday, September 8, 2017

**Paul wrote: I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for**

**the sake of Christ.**

2 Corinthians 12:10

I always knew there was a difference between Paul and me. He speaks blithely of enduring persecutions and calamities. I become upset with a hangnail. He bears insults and hardships. I think I’m “roughing it” if I’m

at a Hilton that doesn’t provide a blow-dryer in my room. Of course, we all go through truly trying times—illness, loss, fear, loneliness. Most lives have their trials and pains. Paul suffered more than most of us will ever go through. But he was able to bear it because he knew why he was pursuing his mission; he knew what mattered to him, and he knew the Lord he was serving. Perhaps in our times of trial, we can remember that we endure troubles and grief in this life in the context of the certainty of God’s love and our eternal life. Such faith will

not magically make our troubles disappear, but it may make them more bearable. We have Paul’s word on that.

Saturday, September 9, 2017

**Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly**

**Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?**

Matthew 6:26

Christian literature is filled with stories about people who stepped out in faith – giving away what they had

or beginning a new life or a new enterprise with no idea of where the resources would come from. There is

a balance to be reached here. God does not expect us to be foolish about our lives, and he certainly does not expect us to test him or his powers by daring him to provide for us. What today’s verse reminds us of is the reality that abundance is all around us, in nature and in life. There is a ‘providing power’ that we can recognize and call upon. Most of all, we are reminded that there is no such thing as a worrying wren or a fretting ferret. God’s creatures trust him naturally and instinctively. We should, too.

Sunday, September 10, 2017

**Jesus said, “The gates of Hades will not prevail against my church.”**

Matthew 16:18

This is Jesus – the Jesus who threw the money-changers out of the temple, the Jesus who looked Roman

soldiers in the eye and told them to ‘render unto Caesar’ – saying, in effect, “Bring it on!” This is the courageous, daring, triumphant Christ who knows … knows … that no power on earth and no power of evil can or will defeat the power of God and his love and his church. His ‘church’ is not a building, a doctrine, or a set of statements.

It isn’t even the sacraments or the scriptures. His church is you and me. It is our parents, our grandparents,

our ancestors, our children and great-grandchildren. It is our love and faith, our compassion and kindness,

our courage and wisdom-- offered over the generations to serve creation and glorify the Creator. Over the massive arc of time and history, nothing will prevail against this church. Nothing.

Monday, September 11, 2017

**Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes**

**and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God.**

Acts 2:46-47

We often hear people say, “I don’t need church. I can worship God in my own home or in the beauty of nature.” Of course, we can worship God at home, and nature is a constant reminder and reflection of God. But the early Christians, who ‘met together in the temple courts’ and ‘broke bread together’ understood something important that we often forget. It is in community, in being together as believers, that we can often achieve results and develop levels of faith that can’t come about otherwise. For those for whom the modern church has become hypocritical or become a barrier to the strengthening of faith, there is still the option of gathering with other believers, sharing with them, working with them. God certainly knows us and loves us individually, but it is

often in community that we can do our greatest work for him. After all, if the men and women of Jesus’s time who heard him, believed him, and followed him had gone to their own homes after the resurrection and closed their doors, never to meet together, how could the church have begun or come down to us? We, too, must develop and pass on a living, loving community—a church.

Tuesday, September 12, 2017

**Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.**

Romans 121:2

Today’s verse is a mini lesson in how to live. There isn’t much that isn’t covered, simply and lovingly,

in those words. Beyond the wisdom of the words is their amazing application to all people—youngsters,

adults in their prime, and senior citizens. Regardless of our ages, or our current circumstances, life is simply better and more peaceful and productive if we have hope, patience, and faith. Is there something for which

you hope? Focus on that today, and do so with real, genuine joy. Is there an affliction in your life? An illness

or disability, a fear or a worry? Ask God for patience and then let the peace of God come into your spirit.

If you make time to pray today, begin by affirming your faith, your belief that God hears and loves and responds. If you don’t feel that kind of faith, pray anyway, and ask for the gift of faith. Three things: joy in hope, patience in affliction, and faith in prayer. These are all we need, and they are blessings, indeed.

Wednesday, September 13, 2017

**Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who**

**built his house on a rock.**

Matthew 7:24

We make countless choices over a lifetime; choices about critical matters and choices about relatively unim-portant things. But few people ever ask the question, “On what will I build my life? Base my actions upon? What will be the central commitment of my life from which all other choices and decisions will radiate?”

Those are enormous questions, and most of us are not philosophical enough or wise enough to actually ask ourselves those questions. Instead, we bumble along, making the best choices we can at the moment. But any time in life is a good time to think deeply – think spiritually and philosophically – about the foundation of our lives. Life will always have choices. There will always be divergent paths lying before us; times when we have to go in one direction or another. Today might be a good day to sit quietly for a while and ask, “What has guided me thus far in my decisions and choices? What is the foundation for my life? And what do I want the foundation for the future to be?” If we allow Christ and his teachings to be that foundation, we know that we will be building as strong and as good a life as possible, whether we have 75 years ahead of us or 75 months … or even 75 days.

Thursday, September 14, 2017

**Ah Lord God! It is you who made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your**

**outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you.**

Jeremiah 32 :17

I believed that my father could do anything—solve any problem, meet any need, heal any hurt, and fix any

entity: toys, tools, or broken hearts. When he died, part of my grief came from the fact that a person I could

rely upon 100% was gone. Soon, I realized that I still had my heavenly Father, and that his trustworthiness was even greater than Dad’s. Each of us needs to be able to rely – 100% -- on someone or something. We have a deep, inborn need to be able to trust someone without question. If we’re fortunate, a parent or grandparent fills that role. Sometimes, a sibling, a spouse, or a friend does. Whatever our earthly relationships, we know that God has a power we cannot comprehend, but one we can rely upon. It is a power that flung the stars across the sky and designed coral reefs and cardinals. It is a power that moves the tides and moves the hearts of men; a power that we can see in atoms, algebra, and azaleas. Infinite creative power! Infinite love*! “Lord God, thank you that ‘nothing is too hard for you,’ and nothing can separate me from your power and your love. Nothing. Amen.”*

Friday, September 15, 2017

**You say, “I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing.” You do not realize that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.**

Revelation 3:17

This verse cuts us down to size. It puts our human pride in its place. Too often, our pride – the negative pride that is a self-centered, ego-based conceit – is rooted in our wealth, our job titles, the size of our homes, our social standing, our fame, influence, or self-importance. But in God’s eyes, none of that matters. The things that matter to God are not summarized in an investment portfolio or the social column of the Sunday paper. What matters to God is our ability to love – especially, to love those who are different from us or who are our enemies – and our willingness to serve, even when it is difficult or when such service takes us out of our comfort zone or costs us something. The qualities that God cherishes are qualities that the world often denigrates: truthfulness, gentleness, compassion, humility, forgiveness, and reverence. These are the qualities that define Christ; qualities that have drawn us to worship in his name for 2,000 years. God doesn’t look at our bank accounts. He looks into our hearts. When he finds love, justice, mercy, and generosity in those hearts, we need never fear being “wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, or naked.” Instead, we will be rich beyond measure with the wealth of God’s love.

Saturday, September 16, 2017

**When you pass through the waters I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through the fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.**

Isaiah 43:2

This verse has special meaning for me. More than 40 years ago, when I was about to begin training to become

a scuba diver, I prayed deeply about that intention. I told God that I knew this was a dangerous sport, and I did not want to pursue it unless he blessed my desire and gave me his approval. I asked him to give me a very specific, clear sign or word before I would begin my training. On the day of my first class, the verse above was the reading for the day in the *Moravian Daily Texts*, the devotional that I read every day. When I read those words, it seemed as if God himself was saying them to me, and saying ‘Go, learn, enjoy. I will be with you.’

I began three months of rigorous training with a former Navy SEAL and his dive team. I became internationally certified as an advanced open water (open ocean) diver. I have dived in many awesome underwater locations,

and in many challenging situations. I have enjoyed deep diving, tunnel diving, wreck diving, and night diving. While I have always respected the power of the sea and its creatures, I have never been afraid. I always remembered God’s promise to me, and I believed it. Can God give you a very specific, direct answer to a question or a need? Just ask me. Better yet … ask God. Ask him for the sign you need or want. It will come.

Sunday, September 17, 2017

**Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.**

Colossians 3:13

This is a very personal verse, in the sense that it speaks to matters we usually keep to ourselves. Only we know how much others have hurt us. Only we know how insults or injuries still cause us pain deep inside. Only we know how much we may have struggled to forgive, perhaps failed, and struggled again. These aren’t things we usually speak about to others. Today’s verse is also one that we come back to again and again, trying to come to terms with it, to understand it, and to obey it. God knows how hard forgiveness is. He waits with us and works

in us so that we can, in time, give and receive forgiveness. *“I can’t talk about this with anyone else, Lord. But*

*I can talk about it with you. You know what happened to me. You know how I hurt. You know whom I may have hurt. Help me, Lord. Help me to forgive and to accept forgiveness. Be with me in this, however long it takes.”*

Monday, September 18, 2017

**When your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness.**

Isaiah 26:9

A toddler learns not to touch something hot when she burns her fingers. We learn to ride a bike by falling off. We learn by seeing, experiencing, and doing. When God made his presence known in the ancient world – through the plagues that wracked Egypt, the flood that covered the land, the Israelites’ escape through the Red

Sea – people learned about God’s righteousness—the truth of his promises, the power of his word, and the love

he has for his creation. In this high-tech world, we still do most of our learning the same way—by seeing, doing, experiencing. And God’s lessons are still the same: ‘I love you, I will deliver you, I am with you, I have willed good for you.’ We may have to learn these truths again and again, but what matters is that we learn them.

Tuesday, September 19, 2017

**Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.**

Romans 12:21

Retaliation is a human instinct. When we’re hit, we usually strike back (or at least we want to strike back.)

But God asks us to take a different approach, a higher path. God understands that if we respond to evil by creating more evil, we haven’t solved anything, we have only doubled the amount of evil in the situation.

But when we respond to evil by focusing on the good – on God’s way of dealing with difficulties – we diffuse

the situation. We rob evil of its power to control us. Psychologists recognize the truth that “You get what you think about, whether you want it or not.” When we focus on evil, we create more of it and draw it to ourselves. When we focus on good – on God – we draw the good powers of healing, peace, and reconciliation to ourselves and to the world. It is the wiser choice.

Wednesday, September 20, 2017

**Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.**

Psalm 37:4

Many people turn to this verse to pray for what they deeply desire. But there is another way to read these words. Perhaps the psalmist wasn’t only saying that when we live closely to God we will receive the desires of our hearts. Perhaps he also meant that when we “delight in the Lord” and love and trust God, God will place the

right desires *within* our hearts; he will ‘give’ us the desires of our hearts by defining those desires for us, by placing his will for what is good and best for us within our hearts to begin with. Whether we read these words

as a promise of God’s response to our desires or as his will written in our hearts to create those desires, what matters is that we see the link between living in companionship with God – delighting in him – and being able

to have fullness of life in that closeness, to receive the desires of our hearts.

Thursday, September 21, 2017

**In the morning, Lord, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and**

**wait expectantly.**

Psalm 5:3

What a blessing to begin the day with prayer, with a quiet time in which we focus on God and place the day

in his hands. It is a form of centering ourselves; reminding ourselves of what – and Who – really matters.

Most of us have lives filled with activities and needs; things we have to do and people we have to accommodate.

Our human bodies, minds, and hearts can do a lot, but they aren’t limitless. We need the peace and power of God’s presence in our lives each day. We also need to do what is stated at the end of today’s verse: wait ex-pectantly. Wait with hope. Wait in faith. After we pray, we should maintain a level of attentiveness and focus, watching and waiting for God’s answers and signs. And if it is more natural for us to pray at night, that’s fine, too. God is there 24/7, ready to hear us, be with us, answer us. *“Here I am, Lord. Today I want to pray about \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.”*

Friday, September 22, 2017

**Joseph said to his master’s wife, “How then could I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?”**

Genesis 39:9

The story of Joseph has enough drama for several films or TV productions. Beloved by his parents, betrayed

by his brothers, sold into slavery, left to die, used by God, trusted by Potiphar, the captain of the guards; falsely accused by Potiphar’s wife, condemned, imprisoned, elevated to power by Pharaoh, given authority over Pharaoh’s lands, changed by God, reunited with his family, used to save thousands. Whew! But at each step

of Joseph’s journey, he wrestled with the same doubts and despairs that affect us. In today’s verse he asks Potiphar’s wife, who threatens to accuse him of rape, how he could ever do such a thing and violate God’s law

as well as his master’s trust. Implicitly, he’s also asking her how she could tell such a lie. Joseph can’t believe that she could say such a thing or that others would believe it. But she does, and they do; and Joseph enters the darkness of prison. To be falsely accused or unjustly punished is a severe trial. Those who live in honor and obey God’s laws can’t understand the actions of those who don’t. It was that way in Joseph’s time and is so in ours. We can’t understand why people lie, make false accusations, and betray the innocent. Perhaps the story of Joseph can help us to endure such miseries and to know that ultimately it is God who will declare our innocence.

Saturday, September 23, 2017

**The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.**

1 Thessalonians 5:24

Would you ask someone who never had a music lesson to play the piano? Of course not. Would you ask

a little child to lift a 400-lb. weight? No. Well, God does not ask us to do what we cannot do. He does not put desires or dreams in our hearts that he has not gifted us to fulfill. He does not call us to work or service if we don’t have the abilities or potential to do that work. Whatever our life’s calling, whatever it is that God has

willed for us to do … that we prayerfully feel called to do… he will help us to do. *“Thank you, Lord, for being with me and for providing whatever I need or will need to live my life abundantly and in your will.”*

Sunday, September 24, 2017

**You have heard of this hope before in the word of the truth. The gospel that has come to you. Just as**

**it is bearing fruit and growing in the whole world, so it has been bearing fruit among yourselves from**

**the day you heard it and truly comprehended the grace of God.**

Colossians 1:5-6

What a fascinating thought! At the same time that the loving will of God is surfacing in our hearts and homes,

it is emerging in our congregations, in other places of worship, other communities, other countries. The words and deeds of love and kindness being done at sunrise in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania – in God’s love and power –

are being done in some form as the sun sets in Beijing, China. God’s grace and guidance may come to us as individuals, but they blossom in human hearts and in settings all over the world. We don’t experience God’s presence in isolation. We are part of a universal church, a network of love and good works that spans the globe. Just as prayer can reach through time and space, so ‘the word of truth’ can reach across borders and boundaries. Let’s step back from our own lives today, and look at the world from God’s perspective. Yes, there is need and trouble in many places. But look at all the places where God’s love is being shown. The view is breathtaking!

Monday, September 25, 2017

**Pay attention to how you listen.**

Luke 8:18

Wow. This verse hits home. Most of us can hear, but we have trouble listening. How often a spouse or a parent says, “Didn’t you hear anything I just said? Weren’t you listening?!” It can be hard to listen, to make ourselves sit still and to quiet the voices and thoughts that are always swirling through our minds. Today, let’s discipline ourselves to really pay attention to what people say to us. Perhaps, to listen also for a tone in their voices or a catch in their throats; listen for the hidden messages beyond what they say, and get a glimpse of how they feel. And let our prayer today be this: *“Lord, today I will simply sit and listen for your voice, your word in my mind*

*or my heart. I’m listening, Lord. I’ll be quiet now. I’m listening.”*

Tuesday, September 26, 2017

**You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of God.**

Isaiah 62:3

In this portion of Isaiah, the Judeans were being told that their community would be restored, that the promise

of Abraham will be a perpetual covenant. Jerusalem will be vindicated and restored. The best way to describe such bountiful blessings is in the words used here—personal words and descriptions. God will be glorified in

his people and his people will be beautiful and regal in his hands. Most of us don’t have the problem of thinking too highly of ourselves. Quite the opposite. We usually have too low an opinion of ourselves; we don’t see ourselves as beautiful – physically or spiritually – and we can’t imagine being a royal crown in God’s hands.

But read these words again. God sees us as beautiful in every way. We are a crown to him, a symbol of royalty in his hand. Let those words settle in today. If we dare to believe them, they will help us to see ourselves as

God sees us—beautiful, regal, and part of God himself.

Wednesday, September 27, 2017

**Jesus said, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today.” So he hurried**

**down and was happy to welcome him.**

Luke 19:5-6

I am so glad that God is with me every day; I want his Spirit to be in me and with me always. But I’m also

glad that Jesus in human form hasn’t arrived in town and said to me, “Hurry … I must stay at your house today.” I’d want to spend time with Jesus, but I’d ask if we could meet for coffee or just sit beside the creek and talk.

For months, I’ve been doing a major clear-out at my house, and I don’t want anyone to see my home in this chaotic state. Then I remember: God knows what my house looks like, and he doesn’t care. He is much more interested in the rooms in my heart, the clutter or the clarity in my mind, the peace or chaos in my soul. He smiles because I make time to write Meditations, and he doesn’t mind that I still have to shred the bank statements from 1994. He sees beyond the cardboard boxes that still have to be gone through, and sees, instead, any kindness

I’ve done. God knows what matters. Perhaps, by his grace, someday I will too.

Thursday, September 28, 2017

**When deeds of iniquity overwhelm us, you forgive our transgressions.**

Psalm 65:3

A friend of mine becomes almost physically ill with guilt when she once again loses the battle to stop smoking and lights up a cigarette. Someone else has harbored hatred for a sibling for decades, and that pain is taking

a toll on him. I’m sure there are many who have done things they regret – lying, cheating in financial matters, being unfaithful, even doing physical harm to someone – and that burden of guilt must be, indeed, overwhelming. What is even greater, however, is God’s willingness to forgive; forgive even our worst sins and transgressions. That reality is more overwhelming than our guilt. If we have need for such forgiveness, for misdeeds large or small, today’s verse is a promise we can claim. *“Forgive my transgressions, Lord. Create a new and clean heart within me, and let me begin again in your love and grace. Amen.”*

Friday, September 29, 2017

**Live as children of light—for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true.**

Ephesians 5:8-9

Most parents teach their children to tell the truth. Often, when they do so, they say tell their children

that one problem with telling a lie is that you usually have to tell another lie to cover up the first one.

Like the wisdom about telling the truth versus lying, the choice to live a good life – in the light of ‘good and

right and true’ – is that it solves so many problems. We don’t have to worry about covering up bad deeds.

We don’t have to wonder if someone will discover what we’ve done wrong. It is no small thing to be able

to go to sleep at night with a clear conscience and a clean heart. But that’s the peace we can have when we

“live as children of light.” It is a wise choice.

Saturday, September 30, 2017

**God, I think of you on my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night.**

Psalm 63:6

Meditation seems to be a very new thing, but in fact it is an ancient and revered practice. Allowing our

minds to become quiet and focused allows for peace, insight, and healing to come to us. Many people have learned that it is especially important at night, when we settle down for much-needed rest and sleep, to be

at peace. One way to find such peace is to think about God, about blessings, about hope. Perhaps prayer

can bring such peace. Perhaps thinking of a favorite Bible passage will do so. Whatever our choices, as long

as we allow God to be with us, to calm us and quiet us, we are opening our spirits to the blessings that can

come “in the watches of the night.”

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**Prayer Notes**

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