

Blessed Trinity Lutheran Church at Rosemont

DAILY MEDITATIONS — OCTOBER, 2025

October 1, 2025

“... I came that you might have life, and that more abundantly.”

John 10:10

A pastor said these words in a sermon years ago: “There is no good thing – in heaven or on earth – that God does not will for you.” Those words ... that truth and that reality ... are so powerful that they could have been the entire sermon. They certainly serve as the entire Meditation for today’s verse. Read the words again. Say them. Memorize them. Think of them and let the wonder fill you, let the hope flow through you. “There is no good thing – in heaven or on earth – that God does not will for you.” Read them again, and believe them.

October 2, 2025

He gives food to every creature. His love is eternal.

Psalms 126:35

With succinctness similar to words in yesterday’s Meditation, words from the liturgy we sometimes used in my former church also sum up, with brevity and power, what we seek and need, and what God offers us. In the Confession, we prayed to “the God of manna, the God of mercy, the God of miracles”. That certainly sums it up. We need manna, with all that that word implies— sustenance, food, water, our daily bread, relationships, the necessities of life. We need mercy— love, comfort, healing, protection, forgiveness, new life. And we need miracles— hopes realized, callings made clear, destinies fulfilled, and the large and small miracles in which God seems to move the universe in order to touch us and our lives. These, all of these, come from the God of manna, the God of mercy, the God of miracles, the God who provides these for us. *“Thank you, O God, thank you.”*

October 3, 2025

I am the Lord, who frustrates the omens of liars, and makes fools of diviners.

Isaiah 24:54

It’s natural to want answers, to know why things happen, to understand why some dreams are fulfilled and others are not; why some prayers are answered in the way we asked and others are not. It is also normal to wonder what the future holds. All of these instincts are natural and human. God invites us to take all of our questions ... all of our searching ... to him. In quiet time with God, when we listen, we will hear God’s words in our hearts. Today’s verse cautions against seeking these answers elsewhere, especially from self-proclaimed diviners, fortune tellers. While some people may well have the gift of perception and deep intuitive wisdom, we do best by beginning with – and staying with – God when we have questions and seek answers.

October 4, 2025

Though I speak, my grief is not relieved, and if I remain silent, how am I eased?

Job 16:6

In the past few years, three friends of mine lost their spouses after long, loving marriages. People grieve in different ways. There is no predictable pattern or timeframe for grief. But in these three situations, something unusual happened. In each of these losses, the bereaved spouse has disconnected from friends. Two of these people have maintained contact with family members, but in one instance the connection is only with a son, daughter-in-law, and grandchild, not with extended family. The third person seems to have ended contact with everyone. Phone and text messages are not answered. Cards and notes are not acknowledged. A friend of mine, who is related to one of these people, spoke with me recently. We searched for clues, for answers, and finally concluded that human beings are more complex than we can ever know. Children of God, we are each a blend of mystery and miracle, known ultimately only to God. We can love people, reach out to them, be there for them, and pray for them, but only God can know their minds, hearts, and souls. When we don’t know what to do, let us give those we love to God. *“Comforting Lord, be with those who seem lost to us but are never lost to you.”*

October 5, 2025

Let anyone with ears to hear listen!

Mark 4:9

As a child, I was confused by the words “God’s voice”. Did people hear it in the way they heard voices on the radio? What about people who spoke other languages? Did God speak every language? These were natural questions for a young child. As I grew in my faith, I came to understand that God can speak to us anywhere and everywhere: in the intimacy of prayer, in everyday life at school or at work, in church, and in quiet time with God. God’s words come to our hearts as a kind of knowing, when we sense that we are getting a wisdom beyond our own, and insights we did not create. I often sit near a creek and simply think and meditate, inviting God to tell me whatever he wishes. Being in nature is a wonderful way to open our minds and hearts to God’s leading. But I’ve also heard his voice in my heart while driving on Rt. 22. Yes, God can come to us anywhere, at any time. But, a key part of this exchange is for us to be open and willing to hear God’s words, to be silent, and to wait. It’s hard for most of us to be silent, but in seeking God’s voice, especially if this is new to us, the most important thing we can do is to listen. *“Lord, you know the needs and questions in my heart. You know where I need your leading in my life. I will be still for a while today, Lord. Come to me, be with me, and speak to my heart. I’ll listen.”*

October 6, 2025

You say, “The way of the Lord is unfair.” Hear now, O house of Israel: is my way unfair? Is it not your ways that are unfair?

Ezekiel 18:25

Children often wail, “No fair!” Adults, too, are quick to pounce on perceived unfairness. It seems that we were born with built-in calculators, measuring what we think we deserve versus what we get ... or what someone else is getting. But such measuring and calculating is a losing proposition. We could never do enough to earn God’s favor, which is why God covers us with his grace. We can never know enough about someone else’s life to know the good and the bad they have done, or know the secret sorrows or longings of their hearts. And we can’t see the plans and designs God has that will turn our disappointments into joys. There is so much we can’t know. It is best to forget about calculating and keeping track; forget about comparing our blessings or burdens with someone else’s. Let us be grateful that the God of love showers us with blessings in his time and way, and that God doesn’t calculate our deserving, or compare us with others. God simply loves us. *“Thank you, Lord, for what is ... for what I can know, and what I can’t know.”*

October 7, 2025

Where do wars and fights come from among you?.....

James 4:1

Two years ago today, Hamas made its deadly strike in Israel. News reports say that the war is now two years old. I see it as 4,000 and two years old. After four millennia, is there really no chance for peace in that region? What seems most damning is the likely seeding of conflict for hundreds of years to come. Every child who sees his or her parents die in a bombing, every adult who sees people blown to bits as they stand in line for aid, every toddler who wails in hunger as they reach for a cup of food from a truck that has no food left, every person helping those who are bleeding, broken, and dying; everyone, Israeli or Palestinian, who has lived through this horror, who has lost loved ones ... whole families ... is likely to be thinking not of peace, but of vengeance; likely to teach his or her children about this war and the need to fight forever, to keep killing and destroying. And so, it goes. There is never enough blood to shed, never enough death, never enough revenge. And the God of Abraham, father of the Hebrews, and the God of Ishmael, Abraham’s son and the father of the Arabs, sees and weeps. God. One God. The same God. The God of dead hostages and starving children, dead Arabs, dead Hebrews. That God.

October 8, 2025

Jesus said ... “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing.” Luke 12:22-23

This verse is familiar to us, but it can be hard to find comfort in these words of assurance when there is ‘too much month left at the end of the money’. This is the season of tuition payments, buying winter clothing, school taxes,

and holiday expenses. It can be overwhelming. For people on limited or fixed incomes – or for the unemployed – everyday expenses of food, utilities, and medical care are enough of a strain. To all of these needs and concerns, a seeing and understanding God still says, “...do not worry”. Somehow, in some way, God provides; not always in the ways we expect, sometimes in ways we might not like, but God provides. A friend of mine who lives in New England told me of her experience when her refrigerator died. Divorced from an irresponsible husband, she was raising two young children alone, with a full-time job, a part-time job, and food stamps. She didn’t even have enough money to buy a used refrigerator from the second-hand shop. She did what she always does— she prayed. The next day, a neighbor in her apartment building asked if she knew anyone who needed a refrigerator; they had just gotten a new one. Jesus’s words also recognize that worry is counter-productive; it does nothing to help us. When Jesus says that life is more than food and the body more than clothing, he is reminding us of our priorities. Important as physical needs are, we should seek first to be in a right relationship with God. When that is in place, we will have the perspective and faith to seek and accept God’s providence in all areas of our lives.

October 9, 2025

(Jesus said) “If a house is divided against itself that house will not be able to stand.” Mark 3:25

Division is a subtle thing, but it can be insidious in its destructiveness. Families can be divided, spouses can be divided, churches and communities can be divided, and institutions of government can be divided. Differing opinions are one thing; hurtful, poisonous divisions are another. Jesus knew that in his time. Today, those who want to manipulate and control people’s thinking – to divide people – have loud voices, powerful personalities, and national stages. Cable news channels are on all day; a constant stream of words hammered at us. That noise seems to be getting louder, more intense, more frightening ... and more divisive. What do we do? How can we even think about this? There is a way. God’s word, Jesus’s teachings, and the Holy Spirit within us offer guidance to discern what the loud voices are saying. If what is being said makes you afraid (‘They’re coming to take away your possessions, to take away your religion, they want to outnumber us ...’), it is not of God. If what is being said separates ‘us’ from ‘them’, it is not of God. If what is being said is ugly and vicious (‘They’re all vermin!’), it is not of God. If what is being said is lies, it is not of God. If what is being said denigrates and hurts others, it is not of God. If what is being said promotes or excuses violence, it is not of God. If what is being said aims to limit or abolish basic human rights, dignity, and freedom, it is not of God. Those are some of God’s own standards for discernment of what is right and good, and we should use them. It would be wonderful if we could hear and evaluate ideas in terms of the positive, truthful thoughts they offer. Until that day comes, we have God’s guidelines for what is *not* aligned with his will: fear, degradation, divisiveness, hate, lies, violence, suppression. Since the time of Abraham, God could not have made it any clearer. Even in the noise of social and political clamor, we can hear God’s voice, God’s truth. We have a choice: God’s truth and Jesus’s teachings, or the ugly and vicious voices of those who try to twist truth and control and pervert our thinking. It’s a choice we must make. We cannot be divided against ourselves and remain standing. That is a division God never intended.

October 10, 2025

Show them proof of your love.

2 Corinthians 8:24

An old joke says that, on their 75th anniversary, a wife asked her husband why he never said that he loved her. The husband replied, “Well, I told you once. I figured I’d only have to say something if I changed my mind.” The husband was wrong. We need to hear “I love you” as often as possible. We need to say it as often as possible. We need to show our love and receive the love others offer to us. We were made in love and for love. If romantic love is not part of our lives, then the love of family and friends, love for God ... for those we care about or who care for us ... must be our focus. But love must be spoken and shown. Love that is not shown or expressed is like a treasure that is buried and hidden. It never fully realizes its purpose. Imagine how your corner of the world would change ... would light up ... if today you told every person for whom you feel love that you love them. Some people might be surprised to hear those words. A few might say “I love you” in return. Everyone would feel a deep gratitude in their hearts. So would you.

October 11, 2025

He has gained renown by his wonderful deeds; the Lord is gracious and merciful. Psalm 111:4

Poet Maya Angelou wrote, “People may forget what you say to them. They may even forget what you do for them. But they will never forget how you make them feel.” When someone does something kind and good – “gracious and merciful” – we remember it. We remember, because kindness, in any form, touches our hearts and leaves an imprint. We remember because ... for one moment, in one circumstance ... we see that love and goodness are real. In a world too often defined by violence, hatred, and foolishness, we catch a glimpse of a better way, a higher vision, a nobler calling. No wonder the ancient tribes remembered the Lord’s deeds of mercy and love. The love and kindness we show ... anywhere, anytime ... will also be remembered. We may never have renown, but we, and our graces and mercies, will be cherished and remembered. It is enough.

October 12, 2025

There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword ... the tongue of the wise promotes good. Prov. 12:18

In autumn, many of us think of school, even if we’re long past our school days. Recently, I recalled an event from ninth grade, something that taught me a valuable lesson. In English class, we read *Ivanhoe* by Sir Walter Scott. The teacher told us to do a special project, of our own choosing, related to that book. I did pencil drawings of the major characters: Rowena, Ivanhoe, Cedric the Saxon, King Richard II, Isaac, Rebecca. I worked carefully on the drawings for many hours, over many days, and I was pleased with the result. A few weeks after we turned in our projects, the teacher called us to his desk individually to hear his assessment of our work. When he called me to his desk he was smiling; a good sign, I thought. He said the drawings were excellent, and he was impressed. Then he said, “But wouldn’t it have been much nicer if you had done them in color?” My heart sank. The message was clear: my drawings were good, but not good enough. I was surprised ... and angry. I wanted to reply (although I didn’t) ‘Would framed oil paintings of each character be sufficient?’ I re-did all the drawings with colored art pencils, although the original drawings were much more effective, without the distraction of color. In the years and decades that followed, perhaps because of that experience, I’ve been sensitive to those “But” reactions, whether aimed at me or other people. Male classmates told me about coaches who said “Yeah, we won the game, you played well, *but* you could have scored even more.” A professor saying, “Nice that you’re going to grad school, *but* too bad it’s not an Ivy League school.” In adulthood, I saw colleagues deflate when a boss said, “Great that you exceeded your goal, *but* I think you could have done even more.” Most painful are the personal swipes: the husband who says, “Nice dress, *but* aren’t you going to do something with your hair?” The parent asking, “Why that B? Why not *all* As?” We’re each fragile in some way, about some things. Our sense of self can easily be bruised or battered. This is especially true for children and young people whose sense of self is just forming. “Think before you speak” is advice we heard as we grew up. It’s still good advice. No compliment should ever be followed by “But”, by a verbal “piercing of a sword”, not even an unintentional one. Think before you speak.

October 13, 2025

There is forgiveness with you, so that you may be revered.

Psalm 130:4

We can be grateful for many things: beautiful weather, a roof over our heads, food on the table, family, friends, work to do, and the chance to rest when work is done. When it comes to our relationships, there are three things for which we are deeply grateful. First, we are loved, by God and by those who have graced our lives. Love is the greatest gift that we can receive. Second, we are grateful when people are there for us; when we know that they care and that we can turn to them. Third, we are grateful when we are forgiven. Most of us feel regret instantly when we say or do something to hurt another person. Sometimes, our pride makes it difficult to say “I’m sorry.” Too often, years go by before reconciliation can happen. But when someone forgives us ... and when we have the wisdom to forgive others or forgive ourselves ... something beautiful happens in our souls. No wonder the psalmist spoke of the forgiving Lord being revered. Awe and reverence are appropriate reactions to the miracle of forgiveness. “*Lord, today I forgive _____ . Forgive me for _____ .*”

October 14, 2025

Jesus says, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.” 2 Corinthians 12:9

There are two words in today’s verse that we don’t like: sufficient and weakness. When we come to God with our needs and desires, we don’t want ‘grace that is sufficient’. We want healing. We want a job. We want someone to

love and relief from loneliness. We want to have children. We want comfort in grief. We want healing in our marriage. We want many things, but we don't want 'grace that is sufficient'. We also hate the idea of weakness. No one wants to be weak. So, what is this verse saying? Jesus tells us to bring our needs and desires to God, but at times we must wait for the fulfillment of our desires, and sometimes our prayers can't be answered in the way we wish. God tells us that he is with us in the waiting, in the revealing of the future, and in the pain of what cannot be. In these moments, God covers us with grace sufficient to carry us through. Weakness is necessary to bring us to God in the first place. If we could do it all ourselves, we might never turn to God. Our weakness is God's gift to us, enabling us to seek him, and our uplifted hands, and our searching, trusting hearts are our gift to God.

October 15, 2025

I will praise you for I am fearfully and wonderfully made

Psalm 139:14

One of the most unforgettable moments in my life is one that didn't involve me. I was only a spectator, but the moment is seared into my memory. My Dad had brought Mom home from the hospital. Two doctors had diagnosed her as having breast cancer. A lump the size of an egg had grown in her left breast, but she'd refused to go to a doctor; a legacy of her lifetime of caring for her mother and spending endless time in hospitals and doctors' offices. When Mom finally went to the doctor, she was immediately scheduled for surgery. (What happened during that surgery is a story for another time.) When Mom came home, with her chest and shoulder bandaged, and with her arm in a sling, she went into the living room to talk to her mother (my grandmother) who lived with us. "Hello, Mom," she said. "I'm home from the hospital." Grammy said nothing and didn't even look at her. Still looking at the TV, Grammy started in on Mom, berating her for being gone for so many days, telling her there was housework to be done, and demanding to know when dinner would be ready. Mom was stunned. She said, "I was in the hospital, Mom. They thought I had cancer. I was afraid I would die. And you can't even ask how I am?" There was silence. No one moved. I was on one side of the dining room and Dad was on the other. Mom stood in the middle, looking into the living room where Grammy sat. Finally, Gram said, curtly, "All right, how are you?" Another long silence. Mom just stared at her mother as if she was seeing her for the first time. Then, Mom slowly turned away and walked toward the kitchen. Gram got up, followed her, and asked again, "How are you?" Mom turned to look at her, and the longest moment of silence followed; a moment in which Mom seemed to be remembering all the days and years that had gone before. Mom seemed to be changing before our eyes. "It doesn't matter," Mom said to her mother, calmly, and with a kind of new resolve. "It just doesn't matter. I've been waiting all my life for you to care about me. But it doesn't matter now, because you can't hurt me anymore. From now on, nothing you say or do will ever hurt me. I won't let it. I'll take care of you, and I'll treat you with respect and kindness, but I will never let you hurt me again. It's over. *You can't hurt me anymore.*"

As Dad and I watched Mom's extraordinary transformation, we also saw a change come over my grandmother. She seemed to shrink, physically, before our eyes, as if some kind of power was seeping out of her. Over the next days and weeks, Gram frequently hurled her verbal spears at Mom, but they fell short of their mark. Mom ignored them, seemed to not even hear them, while she also seemed to grow in strength, freedom, and serenity. Getting no reaction to her comments, and therefore no satisfaction, the game ended for my grandmother, and she stopped her hurtful behavior. A kind of peace settled in. In time, there were no more criticisms, no more barbs, no more cutting comments. Eventually, genuine affection came from Grammy, and Mom once again openly showed the love that, for her, had never ceased. (That, too, is a story for another time.) Yes, people can say and do many things to hurt us. People can be cruel, and we can do nothing to prevent that cruelty. But therapists and psychologists often remind us that much of the hurt that people inflict on us couldn't happen without our permission. Too often, we allow others to hurt us. It might not be easy to break that pattern, but it can be done. I know. I've seen it happen. We might begin with affirming our own sense of sanctity and self-worth: "*I am fearfully and wonderfully made....*" It can be done. I know. I've seen it happen.

October 16, 2025

Those who serve well gain a good standing for themselves and great boldness in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

1 Timothy 3:13

Many things that we do for God or for others are things that return to bless us. If we are compassionate, we find that our heart is deeper and more sensitive to others. If we give love, we are better able to receive love. If we

forgive, we can accept forgiveness. The good we do returns to bless us. Today's verse speaks of gaining a good standing and great boldness in faith. Perhaps what this means is that, as we love and serve God and his creation, our own souls ... our capacity for a full and meaningful life ... will grow. We will be more aware of how good it feels to do what is right and good. We will have a natural boldness and confidence in acknowledging and speaking about our faith. We are not wind-up toys set in motion by a controlling God. We are human beings with free will. When we set that will in the direction of the highest and best that we know, doing that 'highest and best' will make us the kind of people God created us to be. But we must make that choice, do that work.

October 17, 2025

Salt is good, but if salt loses its flavor, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another. Mark 9:50

I glanced at the items in the refrigerated display case at the grocery store, and I laughed out loud. I was looking at a selection of Homemade Puddings: tapioca, vanilla, chocolate, and rice pudding. On the bottom of every label, on every container, was the written assurance: "Made in a nut-free environment." How could I *not* laugh? I know—the label means that people allergic to peanuts or other nuts need not worry about how these puddings were made. But I like my first reaction. As I was laughing, I thought about my life. From family to school to workplaces to the community, I don't think I've ever been in a 'nut-free environment' ... and I'm glad! Except for people who are vile and destructive, it's the people who are a little off center, a bit quirky – the ones who are funny and who can see the silly or absurd side of life – who make life interesting and even bearable. Such people leaven our lives as yeast leavens bread. They let us rise above the obvious and the mundane. In a way, they help us to know that even serious and scary situations can have a lighter side or a surprise solution. I'm truly grateful for all the funny, odd, eccentric, unpredictable, and off-center people in my life, past and present. They've brought me smiles and sanity in equal measures. I like to think I'm one of them. If there are people who seem a bit odd to you, give them a chance. They may be in your life for a reason—to make you think, smile, laugh, respond, discover, change, open up. You, too, would probably be bored in a 'nut-free environment'. *"Lord, thank you for each and every one of the precious people you've created and brought into our lives, even the quirky ones, even the strange ones, even those who challenge us or startle us. Especially those who challenge or startle us. In them, we can see your hand at work in us."*

October 18, 2025

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time. 1 Peter 5:6

It's hard for most of us to be humble. We want others to think well of us, and self-confidence is healthy and necessary for each of us. But the humility that God asks of us does not contradict or negate self-confidence. Instead, it asks us to see ourselves with perspective; to understand that we cannot serve the world when we think we're the center of that world. We can't respect, honor, and love others if we think that no one is as good or as worthy as we are. Runaway ego separates us from others with the mistaken notion that we are better than anyone else. Humility allows us to let others into our lives because we recognize that they have value, too. The God who created us knows how precious and important we are. Let God do the exalting. God knows us best.

October 19, 2025

He is a shield for all who take refuge in him. Psalm 18:30

A rabbit lived in my garden this year. I spotted him when he was so tiny that he could have fit into my hand. I have a special love for rabbits. The three rabbits who lived with me in my apartment over the years were named Papillon, Pipkin, and Pepper. I was so happy that this wild rabbit was in my garden. I watched him grow, and I spoke softly to him when he let me come near. I watched when Bunsy snuggled under the large shrubs at the side of the house. I smiled when he stretched out under the flowering bushes, secure in thinking he was hidden from sight. Rabbits know instinctively that they need to be protected, that they need a safe place, a refuge, something to shield them from the blazing sun, from dogs trotting by, and from hawks that circle above. Bunsy needed a shield and a refuge. So do we. *"Thank you, Lord, for being my shield and my refuge."*

October 20, 2025

**See, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth,
I tell you of them.** Isaiah 42:9

It is regrettable that the reality of prophecy – the God-given gift for some to discern future realities and present potentials – has been tarnished by the scams of those pretending to be diviners, soothsayers, or fortune-tellers. Prophecy and insight, the gifts of discernment, are as real in our time as in Isaiah's time. The ancient prophets were gratified when the things they foresaw came to pass. In warning or encouraging the people, those prophets were doing what God gifted them to do. When the people saw prophecies materialize, they had increased faith in the word of God as the prophets relayed it. Christ himself quoted the Psalms and the prophets. God speaks to each of us in some way ... in quiet, personal ways ... to lead us and to show us the way we should go. We may not be prophets, but we may be able to discern God's will, to hear his voice. Today, let us listen for that voice.

October 21, 2025

(Jesus said) ... "you shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Matthew 22:39

Jesus's teaching in today's verse seems so clear, but how we humans have ignored it! In today's world of racial, gender, and ethnic tensions, words and phrases intended to simply make us aware have become lightning rods. Decades ago, the phrase 'consciousness raising' was used to reflect awareness of the fact that not only did most women in the workforce earn far less than their male peers – for the same or superior work – but many also had to endure groping and grabbing, insulting comments, and even the threat of 'no play, no pay.' The phrase was also used to highlight the hidden horror of domestic abuse; the beating and battering of women and children that, for centuries, even police and the law dismissed as a family matter. But people who resisted any change in that status quo mocked 'consciousness raising' as a joke. They did the same with 'political correctness', a concept intended to stem the use of ugly names, slurs, and insults. Again, the phrase was twisted to suggest that only a fool would want to be politically correct, to refrain from using ethnic, religious, and other slurs. Other words and concepts, intended to make us more aware of the humanity of all people, and to be more respectful toward each other ... more obedient to Jesus's teachings ... have also been mocked. But being aware, sometimes known today as 'woke', is a prerequisite to being respectful, treating others as God wants us to treat them. Before I bought my home, I read real estate ads regularly. One day, an ad jumped out at me. It showed two photos of nice suburban homes. The features of the homes, their locations, and their prices were noted ... in English. Beneath that ad, the same real estate company drew a line. Beneath the line it said "Habla Espanol" (Spanish spoken). The photos under "Habla Espanol" were of rundown fixer-uppers in less desirable neighborhoods. The implication and the insult were obvious: nice homes are for English-speaking people; Hispanics can only want/afford/deserve a rundown house. Perhaps statistics show that Hispanic homebuyers spend less for a home than other purchasers. But there is no excuse for the insult and idiocy of such an advertisement. Our community is filled with Hispanic doctors, nurses, teachers, engineers, attorneys, and business owners. Why would any seller, of anything, assume that someone's ethnicity limits what they can want, buy, or afford? Why would anyone insult people by implying 'this is all you can have'? Christ tells us to be aware of each other, of people's hopes, situations, challenges, hurts, and needs; to see all people as God's children. Jesus teaches us to have respect, compassion, and caring for each other. Those who don't like the phrases 'consciousness raising', 'political correctness', or 'woke' might prefer Jesus's words "*...love your neighbor as yourself.*" They mean the same thing.

October 22, 2025

For God alone my soul waits in silence; from him comes my salvation.

Psalms 62:1

We know what is meant by "wild goose chase"—it's the pointless act of running around trying to do something or find something that will never yield results. We sometimes go on wild goose chases in our lives, looking for a thrill or a satisfaction or a result that always eludes us because we're looking in the wrong places and seeking the wrong things. Often, it's later in life when we realize that material success and wealth, life in the fast lane, and worldly importance don't bring us the peace and deep-down gratification and sense of security that most of us want. Abiding peacefully in God's presence, even when things may not be peaceful in other aspects of our lives, brings serenity to our spirits, calmness to our minds, and even harmony to our bodies. Such peace and tranquility

may be difficult to find or create in our busy lives, in our often tense world, but it is precisely that busyness and that tension that require inner peace. And ultimately, when we know that our earthly life – a life that will end for each of us someday – will usher us into God’s presence and a new life with him, our souls can be stilled. The anxieties of our lives are replaced with peace, with tranquility, and we can hear God’s “Hush, all is well.”

October 23, 2025

He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter.

Isaiah 53:7

This is one of the most difficult Biblical verses to understand and absorb. We are taught to respect ourselves, to stand up for ourselves; beyond that, to stand up for what is right and to fight against evil. So, why would anyone simply bow down before oppression and allow himself or herself to be ‘led to the slaughter’ in some way? Perhaps this verse is telling us that sometimes ... rarely, but sometimes ... when we can’t defeat evil but still can’t give in to it, we must accept defeat in earthly, human terms, so that we may triumph in spiritual, God-directed terms. People who put their lives in danger, to rescue others, know what it means to risk losing life itself. People in workplaces, who stand up for truth and integrity, even when they risk being fired, are in this category. Elected officials who vote for what is best for the country, at the risk of alienating party bosses, are in this category. Few of us are called to take such a stand or make such a sacrifice. But if we are, the Messiah of Isaiah’s writing, the Jesus who came to us in the Gospels, is an example of such sacrificial obedience. In his love, our Lamb has conquered.

October 24, 2025

O Lord, you are the portion of my inheritance and my cup; you maintain my lot.

Psalms 16:5

Last spring, when flip-flopping on tariff policies caused anxiety in financial markets, a familiar contrast came to mind. Since my retirement, I’ve been gratefully awed by how God has stretched my dollars and provided for me, and I’ve also been fearful of how fragile my finances are. I’ve been alternately ashamed and accepting of these contrasting feelings and I’ve taken them to God. My anxieties are also stoked by advertisements for cars, apartments, and retirement residences with prices I think only millionaires can afford. This year, a dear friend once again gave me a monetary gift for my birthday, and I added it to my retirement fund. As always, my account manager, Chris, was gracious and attentive; courtesies not always accorded to people who aren’t wealthy. When he phoned me, he had an array of projections and analyses that say my fund – barring major financial collapses – should last until I’m 94 or 95. Then, I would still have my home to sell. Even God in heaven heard my sigh of relief. I know that I can no more control my future finances than I can control the time of my death. And I know how blessed I am to have health, friends, family, a home, a good mind, a sense of humor, a love of life, and God at the center of life. The birthday gift and the investment manager’s projections reminded me that God is always there to protect and provide for me. *“Thank you, Gracious God. You, indeed, maintain my lot ... in all ways.”*

October 25, 2025

Jesus spoke to them in parables: “The king said to his slaves, ‘Go into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.’”

Matthew 22:9

Today’s verse is a reflection of God’s anger as well as his generosity. The king in the parable has created a feast and invited many guests. But some guests turn their backs on him. They say they have more important things to do. They refuse his hospitality, too rude and unfeeling to even thank him. Angry at the ungrateful invitees, the king throws his doors open to any who will come. We can imagine that many who walked into the banquet hall – poor, disheveled, fearful of being in such a magnificent place – had probably never seen so much food, never eaten as they ate at that banquet. Behind the banquet imagery, of course, is the message that God has given so much to us, and God invites us to live our lives in and with him, lives of abundance and blessing. But so many refuse or ignore that invitation. Whether we have been consistently blessed by God’s grace – and are familiar guests at his banquets – or have lived our lives on the fringes of society, in poverty, or unaccustomed to such blessings or invitations, we must respond with gratitude and respect. It is our King who invites us.

October 26, 2025

The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving.

Daniel 9:9

In extreme stress or danger, people cry “Mercy!” It is a cry from the depths of our beings and is triggered by fear as much as by faith. When we know we are truly helpless, and that we might lose all that we hold dear, “Mercy!” is a natural cry, and our cries are heard by a merciful God. Human beings might not always show mercy, but God does. Whether we emit that cry because we’re in physical danger, as in illness or natural disaster, or whether our anguish is caused by recognition of our own sinfulness, it is a cry that immediately comes to God’s ear and gets his attention. If we have sinned and spoiled our own souls, God forgives. If we are in distress, God has mercy. And in today’s world, where headlines each day bring us news of those perishing in floods or fires, those killed by random violence, those starving because food aid has been halted in war zones, and those caught up in the madness of war, “Mercy!” may be the only prayer we can utter. *“Thank you, Lord. For your forgiveness and mercy— thank you.”*

October 27, 2025

We give you thanks, Lord God Almighty, who are and who were, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign.

Revelation 11:17

The words in the Book of Revelation deal with the ‘end time’ — the time of Christ’s second coming and the renewal of the world itself. We don’t have to wait until that extraordinary time to see evidence of God’s power or his reign. The glimmers of God’s love, and the power of his presence, are all around us, if we’ll just look and see. In people’s kindness and generosity, we can see the abundant heart of God. When people help each other — whether in large ways or small — God’s purpose is fulfilled. Wherever people laugh, love, care for the earth, make music, stand up for justice, behave with honor, or look at the stars in wonder, God is reigning there. We don’t have to wait for the end time. We just have to see its beginnings in our time.

October 28, 2025

Does God not see my ways and number all my steps?

Job 31:4

The Book of Job is one of the most fascinating books of the Bible. It is a book in which we can see so much of ourselves as well as the good and bad in life, the just and the unjust. Job is a good, God-fearing man. Through no misdeeds of his own, he is beset by trials and losses that would crush any person. God permits this torment to reveal the strength of Job’s faith. Job goes from meek submission to questioning to rage to acceptance, much as we might do when life falls apart around us. In today’s passage, Job is asking — saying, really — that God can surely see what he has done, his devotion and good deeds. We often do the same thing when tragedy strikes — we remind God of all we have done, all our faithfulness and service. But we must walk the same road to wisdom that Job walked — seeing that our lives have sorrow and joy, loss as well as love; that God does not abandon us, even when we can’t see him; and that our gracious God will restore us in his time and way.

October 29, 2025

“I will surely save you, and you shall not fall by the sword; but you shall have your life as a prize of war, because you have trusted in me,” says the Lord.

Jeremiah 39:18

There is probably no situation in which people search more desperately for some sign of God’s presence and help than in battle. The very horror of war brings us to our spiritual knees. Soldiers ... even those who may never have thought much about God ... find themselves looking heavenward and hoping that a merciful God will be with them. The battle Jeremiah writes about had gone on for two long years. Finally, Jerusalem was besieged, overrun. People were captured, killed, or carried off. We can imagine the chaos and terror. In the midst of this misery, the voice of God promises rescue. God says that trust in him will be rewarded with life. Most of us will never be in a military battle, but we will find ourselves in other fights; we will know fear and perhaps even terror. In those extremes, God will say to us, “I will surely save you ... because you have trusted in me.” God may not save in the way we expect; he may not save our earthly lives. But God will save us.

October 30, 2025

By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

Genesis 3:19

This is certainly an ominous and depressing verse. But we must remember that ancient people, who used oral traditions of history, including the creation stories in many cultures, lived in a time when life, for most people, was not easy. Many toiled in the fields from dawn until dusk. Nomadic life was dangerous, and life in small villages was not much better. With minimal medical care, life itself was precarious. From the perspective of our time and world, we know that there can be much joy and satisfaction in work. More importantly, we know that when the ever-changing, ever-aging body that has housed our soul for a lifetime comes to its natural end, our dust is not our final form. The real ‘us’, the spirits created by God for endless life, will move into eternity, into realms we have only begun to understand. The body may turn to dust; we turn toward home.

October 31, 2025

“You call me teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am.”

John 13:13

The Navy doctor at the NOAA* lab on St. Croix chose his words carefully. I was at the site for a month of scuba diving and studying marine biology, and my left ear was bothering me. I was sent to this military doctor who was an expert in dive-related maladies. After a lengthy examination, he said that my left ear drum was stretched, with no way to repair it. It’s from deep diving, he said; from going to depths that put great pressure on the ears. “But I always clear my ears successfully,” I told him. “I’ve never had ear pain on a dive. How could this have happened?” He explained that the damage is cumulative. Even if a diver is careful and does everything right, at depth the ears can still be damaged. The pressure is still there; 67 lbs. per square inch at 150 feet deep. He answered the question before I could ask it: “I suggest you give up diving. If you won’t do that, at least dive no deeper than 30, 50, 60 feet. No more deep decompression diving. No more.” His words hit me like a punch in the gut. But you never know when God is teaching you a lesson. In a fairly short time, by God’s grace, I went from tearful regret to thankful acceptance: “The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away.” (Job 1:21) I had done so much and seen so much in those deep waters! I had visual and soul memories that would last forever: maneuvering among underwater mountains, feeling as if I was in the Rockies if they were submerged. Descending the steep walls of the Cayman Trench, then hovering some distance away from those walls, in order to look back at the dramatic drop-offs – with their giant sponges and corals – then looking down, into the black abyss of Bartlett Deep beneath me, 25,000 feet straight down. I have waltzed with many an octopus, eight arms wrapped around me while I sang “Embrace me, you sweet embraceable you ...” I’ve played with and been hugged by wild dolphins in the open ocean, and I’ve fed a giant moray eel with squid held in my mouth, as the eel ... with a double set of razor-sharp teeth that could have taken my face off ... gently plucked the food from my lips scores of times.

By God’s grace, I could focus on such memories, on what I had been given, not on what I was losing. I continued to dive, but those spectacular wall dives and deep dives became a thing of the past. I could still enjoy the beauties and wonders that abound between 15 and 50 feet, where the greatest variety of sea life is found, and I discovered night diving, which became my favorite sport. God teaches us in many ways, often through losses and disappointments. The misfortune of a damaged ear drum led me to appreciate what I had already been given, to let go of what-might-have-been, to discover new joys, and – most of all – to experience grace, pure grace, that lifted me up, in attitude and understanding as well as in spirit. Like all grace, it did for me what I never could have done for myself. My ruined eardrum is nothing – *nothing* – compared to the real troubles and losses, the major tragedies, that so many people experience. But the lessons I learned in this disappointment, over a minor thing, were lessons preparing me for bigger challenges that I didn’t know were coming, preparing me for heartaches about other things that might-have-been, preparing me for later losses that pierced my soul, and preparing me, perhaps, for losses and disappointments still to come, when I might not be able to drive or care for myself or live in my home. I don’t know what the future holds, but I’ve learned that God’s grace is there already, waiting for me. God not only teaches us lessons, he times them as well. And God’s grace never fails.

***National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**