

Devotion #1

Write down a list of the things you prayed about this past week.

Read Acts 4:23-31

Imagine being mocked, put on trial, and beaten for sharing Jesus with other people. Many of us may feel at times that we are persecuted because of our faith, but most of us have no idea what it is really like to face the type of persecution that some of our sisters and brothers around the world face today for confessing Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

While we may not know what it feels like, the early apostles like Peter and John in the book of Acts certainly did. One might expect that in their prayers to the Father in heaven they would ask Him to destroy or wipe out those persecuting them. Yet in verse 29 they simply ask, “Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness.” They didn’t ask for the persecution to stop. Rather, they asked God for the

courage and strength to speak the Word with boldness.

Looking back at your list of prayers for the past week, what do you notice about them? How many of them were about the temporal things of this life? How many about eternal things? Chances are most of us will find ourselves praying for a lot of temporal things. This is not wrong in itself, but our prayer life is not complete until our hearts yearn after the eternal things that our heavenly Father desires. Perhaps we need to start asking our Father in heaven, like the early apostles did, to speak the Word with boldness no matter what the cost. When you pray a prayer like that, don’t be surprised when God gives you an affirmative answer like he did the apostles (v. 31).

Heavenly Father, forgive me for thinking more about the wants and needs of this life than about your eternal desire for all people to be saved through faith in Jesus. Grant me boldness to speak your Word at all times and in all places by the power of your Holy Spirit, so that through me others may come to faith in your Son. In His name I pray. Amen.

Devotion #2

Read: Romans 10:8-11

What comfort Paul gives us in this text, reminding us that the Word of God is near to us. It is not far off, it is not lost and in need of being found, but it is close beside us revealing itself most intimately in the Sacraments. Paul in his writing to the church in Rome makes two things clear about this Word of God that is near to us: it is both in our mouths and in our hearts.

We love that the Word dwells in our hearts, giving us comfort in our times of despair, reassurance in our moments of doubt, strength in our moment of weakness, and, most importantly, the certainty that our sins are forgiven. But perhaps we tend to forget that this same Word is also near to us in our mouths, confessing to the world the truth of Jesus Christ and proclaiming to the lost the message of life and forgiveness found in Jesus.

It can be scary at times for us to share our faith, especially with those who are closest to us, because we may be afraid how they will react. We may also be tempted at times to think that someone else will share the message with them. Yet God has perfectly positioned us by the power of his Spirit to proclaim the grace of God found in Christ Jesus to those around us. We who have experienced the grace of God in the Word that is near to us and in us cannot help but share that Word through our mouths so that others may also be brought near to Him.

Loving Father, thank you for drawing me by the power of your Spirit through Word and Sacrament near to your Son Jesus Christ. Forgive me for forgetting that your Word not only dwells in my heart but in my mouth as well. Help me to seize the opportunities you give to me this day to share the message of hope and forgiveness I have in Christ Jesus, especially to those who are closest to me. In His name I pray. Amen.

Devotion #3

Who are you working with?

Read 1 Corinthians 3:1-11

The people in Corinthians had a problem. They were dividing themselves into camps based on which apostle they liked better and in the process were confusing the message of Jesus. Paul writes to the church in Corinth to help clear up this message by pointing them back to God as the One who really did the work (v. 6). Paul further states that he is just carrying out the mission which he has been called to do, just as the

church in Corinth has a job to do. Paul’s mission statement here in 1 Corinthians is similar to that of the LWML.

“The mission of the Lutheran Women’s Missionary League (LWML) is to assist each woman of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in affirming her relationship with the Triune God so that she is enabled to use her gifts in ministry to the people of the world” (www.lwml.org). The LWML does not exist to do mission work on behalf of her members, but rather does mission work with her members and the gifts that have been entrusted to each person. Success in the LWML is not based on money raised or new programs started, but rather on individual

lives that are changed here in time and in heaven for eternity through our Triune God who gives growth. We may not think that our gift or talent is very important, but each one of us called in our baptism is God's fellow worker with a message to proclaim through word and deed in big and small ways. After all, we can only use what God has given us and He will cause the growth.

Sovereign Father, I praise you for your creative design in the

Devotion #4

WOW!

Read Acts 4:19-20

Have you ever had a WOW moment? You know — one of those moments where you experience a beautiful sunset, the power of a water fall, or the majesty of a mountain? When we have WOW moments, our eyes open wider, we breathe deeper, and our senses are all heightened. WOW moments cause us to want to share with other people what we have seen. A lot of times, though, despite our desire to share the moment with others, we just can't accurately and fully describe the event. The only solution is to have the other person experience the WOW moment as well.

In Acts 4:20 we are told that the early apostles were on trial for their faith. When commanded to not speak any more about Jesus, they responded by saying, "we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard." They had a real WOW experience with Jesus and his life, death, and resurrection. There was no way they could keep silent. They just had to share the joyous message so that others might have

Devotion #5

Your Word is Truth

John 17:13-21

If you are asked to testify in a courtroom, the bailiff will ask you to raise your hand and answer this question: "Do you solemnly swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth so help you God?" As a person called to give testimony in the case, you will then take the stand and answer the questions asked of you. You are called to be truthful! In the courtrooms of our country, billions of dollars are spent for one purpose: to discover the truth. Fortunately we do not have to discover the truth of what God has to say to us. We have the Scriptures given to us and we know that His Word is the truth.

The challenge that we have is to testify to the truth. Recently on a national news show a minister was asked a question similar to this, "Do you really believe that the only way to heaven is through faith in Jesus Christ?" The look on the interviewers face betrayed her bias, especially when the pastor answered, "Yes." He went on to say, "That is not just my opinion, but what the Bible tell us." Immediately, the interviewer began to ridicule his answer.

world, especially in making me a unique child with special gifts and abilities. Help me to use the gifts you have entrusted to me to cause your Word to be proclaimed through my words and deeds, knowing that I do it not with my own strength, but that your Holy Spirit is working through me. Empower groups like the LWML to continue to support more and more people to use their gifts in service to you and in ministry to the world. Amen.

the opportunity to experience the WOW that comes through Jesus. Sometimes we may forget the WOW we get to experience as the children of God when God declares to us our sins are forgiven, not because of what we have done, but all because of Jesus.

So how do people who don't know Jesus get a WOW experience? God has chosen to give WOW experiences With Our Witnessing. He chose you and me to be his hands, feet, and mouth to proclaim the message of Jesus. After all, we who have experienced His grace and undeserved mercy can't help but speak of what we have seen and heard. With Our Witnessing lives are changed by the power of the Holy Spirit. What was doomed for destruction is now redeemed for everlasting life. Now that is a WOW experience that is out of this world.

Gracious Father, WOW! Your majesty, power, and greatness are so far beyond my understanding and for that I praise you. Thank you for allowing me to experience the wonderful gift of the forgiveness of sins through your Son Jesus. Help me this day to be your witness and to share with joy and excitement the gift that you have given to me through faith in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Standing up for the truth is not always easy. We have all experienced times when we should have spoken the truth, but were silent instead. As we thank God for His Word, we ask for forgiveness for failing at times to speak the truth as we should.

The world is in desperate need of knowing and believing the truth of the Word of God. This is true in our nation and also in countries where other religions (like Islam) dominate and the truth contained in God's Word is not known. Groups like the LWML support workers in these areas of the world where standing for the truth of Jesus can be met with violence and even death. Yet even in these areas the truth cannot remain hidden, for as the Word is shared, lives are being changed both now and for eternity.

Gracious Father, forgive me for being silent at times rather than speaking Your Word. Thank for Your Word of forgiveness and for Your Word of Life. Strengthen those who are sharing the truth of Your Word in areas of our world and with individuals who are hostile to the message of Christ. Grant them Your protection and give to them and to me opportunities to share Your Word so that the Holy Spirit may touch the lives of people in desperate need of the message of salvation. Amen.

