

Campaign Devotionals

Calvary Lutheran Church

Devotionals are written reflections on Bible passages, meant to focus us on God. While a capital campaign is an opportunity to raise funds for a project, it is first and foremost an opportunity to grow in faith as we witness what God is able to do through us! Over the next two months, five Sundays will be set aside to explore the campaign themes in worship. You are encouraged to read these devotions ahead of their accompanying Sunday, as we prayerfully consider making a three-year pledge on June 14.

Week 1: Preparing for April 19

Is there enough? Can we actually do this?

John 21:1-19 Devotional by Deacon Mark Nocero

¹ After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he showed himself in this way. ² Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. ³ Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. ⁴ Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach, but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵ Jesus said to them, "Children, you have no fish, have you?" They answered him, "No." ⁶ He said to them, "Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. ⁷ That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he had taken it off, and jumped into the sea. ⁸ But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off.

⁹ When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. ¹⁰ Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." ¹¹ So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred fifty-three of them, and though there were so many, the net was not torn. ¹² Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?" because they knew it was the Lord. ¹³ Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them and did the same with the fish. ¹⁴ This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

¹⁵ When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs." ¹⁶ A second time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep." ¹⁷ He said to him the third time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. ¹⁸ Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go." ¹⁹ (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, "Follow me."

Imagine for a moment being one of the disciples in this reading. During the last three years, your world has been transformed, and life as you knew it no longer exists. You know that Jesus died and has risen but you have no idea what the future holds. You would expect these disciples' anxiety levels to be sky high. Fear of the unknown can be a tremendous weight. The simple act of finding their next meal is a challenge after they spend all night fishing and their nets are still empty. Yet they find comfort because they have faith in Jesus and the love of one another. And Jesus doesn't disappoint. He tells them to drop their nets again, and they catch one hundred fifty-three fish without tearing the net. They then come ashore, and Jesus has already made breakfast for them. They believed, and he provided.

Sometimes the work of a congregation can feel the same. The future may seem uncertain. But we are confident in God's love and thankful for one another. We know that change can be frightening. Calvary has carefully planned its future with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and we can be assured that, as we fill our nets, they will not tear, because God is with us.

Jesus ends his conversation with Peter by saying, "follow me." This is our mission.

A capital campaign is not simply about buildings or improvements. It is about strengthening the church's ability to carry out Christ's mission. It is about creating spaces where community grows, where faith is nurtured, and where people encounter the presence of Christ. We trust that the One who calls us forward is already preparing what lies ahead.

*Gracious God, our faith community is guided by the Holy Spirit.
As we look to the future, give us generous hearts, faithful vision,
and the courage to follow where you lead.
Bless the work of our hands and the gifts we share.
When our nets feel heavy, give us strength
so that this congregation may continue to be a place
where faith is nurtured for generations to come. Amen.*

Week 2: Preparing for May 3

We don't worship our building

Matthew 16:13-20 Devotional by Michael Decker, *property committee*

¹³ Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" ¹⁴ And they said, "Some say John the Baptist but others Elijah and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." ¹⁵ He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" ¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷ And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but my Father in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." ²⁰ Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

I wrestled with this passage for a bit because it seemed to me Jesus was quizzing the disciples if they understood, not necessarily *who* he was, but, *what* he was: our savior. Peter said this correctly (though I don't think he understood what he was saying at the time), to which Jesus replied, "on this rock I will build my church".

However, Jesus was referring to *the Word of God* as the foundation of the church. The more people that believe in God will build an insurmountable church that "...the gates of Hades will not prevail against it." Within the people is the strength of the church—it is not the building itself. The building serves as the place where we are reminded and emboldened in our faith. In part, our building represents our joy in serving God and doing his work. The building is strongest when people are in it, the world is stronger by what we build outside of it.

Lord, help us build a better understanding and acceptance of your love amongst ourselves and unto others, building your church ever higher. Amen.

Week 3: Preparing for May 17

Tools for mission: building as inclusive space

Mark 2:1-12 Devotional by Deacon Tanya Behnke, *finance committee*

¹ When Jesus returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. ² So many gathered around that there was no longer room for them, not even in front of the door, and he was speaking the word to them. ³ Then some people came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. ⁴ And when they could not bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and after having dug through it, they let down the mat on which the paralytic lay. ⁵ When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Child, your sins are forgiven." ⁶ Now some of the scribes were sitting there questioning in their hearts, ⁷ "Why does this fellow speak in this way? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" ⁸ At once Jesus perceived in his spirit that they were discussing these questions among themselves, and he said to them, "Why do you raise such questions in your hearts? ⁹ Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Stand up and take your mat and walk'?" ¹⁰ But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the paralytic ¹¹ "I say to you, stand up, take your mat, and go to your home." ¹² And he stood up and immediately took the mat and went out before all of them, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

Four friends cut a hole in the roof and lowered their friend down to Jesus! Think about the scene: A large gathering, entrances blocked, and crowds that made it impossible for a paralyzed man to reach Jesus. His friends carried him up to the roof, cut a hole in it, and lowered their friend down! It would have been easier for them to leave him home, saying, “Sorry, you can’t see Jesus today, but we’ll go see him and pray for you.”

The world, then and now, often places barriers between people and God, especially in houses of worship. This includes the blatant harm the Church has done by telling the LGBTQ community that they are not welcome at God’s table, but it also includes the smaller scale unwelcoming vibes that someone new gets when they’re told, “This is my seat.” In this reading, the barriers the paralyzed man faced were the crowd and the lack of space for him to be carried in. He wasn’t able to access Jesus unassisted. Some physical barriers at Calvary are obvious, and we have tried to accommodate for them, such as installing an entrance ramp years ago, but others are not so obvious. Our restrooms do not have the space to accommodate a motorized scooter—that’s a barrier; our entryway, where we gather for coffee hour, is often crowded, and some members don’t stay because that many people in a small space is overwhelming—that’s a barrier; fathers don’t have a changing table or a family restroom—that’s a barrier; up until very recently, assisting ministers had to go up a step to reach the pulpit, limiting people with mobility issues from serving—that was a barrier!

As a community, we have done a lot of work over the last few years to develop a welcome statement that includes all people. So, how can we work towards making God more physically accessible through our building? Let’s look back at our reading: Instead of leaving the paralyzed man outside while the friends went to meet Jesus, they carried him up to the roof, cut a hole in it, and lowered him down. They modified a building to ensure that their friend could have access to Jesus! During this campaign, we have the opportunity to expand our welcome beyond a statement, removing physical barriers to ensure that our building is truly accessible! Instead of being the crowd blocking Jesus, we have the opportunity to be the friends providing access!

*Jesus, your ministry taught us what it meant for all to have access to God.
You shared meals with outcasts instead of excluding them.
You healed those that others would have overlooked.
Help us to follow your lead ensuring that all who seek you,
may feel physically and spiritually welcome at Calvary! Amen.*

Week 4: Preparing for May 31

Outward faith

John 6:1-14 Devotional by Deacon Bob Lewis, *worship committee*

¹ After this Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias. ² A large crowd kept following him because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick. ³ Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples. ⁴ Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near. ⁵ When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?" ⁶ He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. ⁷ Philip answered him, "Two hundred denarii would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little." ⁸ One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, ⁹ "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?" ¹⁰ Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." Now there was a great deal of grass in the place, so they sat down, about five thousand in all. ¹¹ Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. ¹² When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, "Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost." ¹³ So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets. ¹⁴ When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, "This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world."

This passage is known as Jesus feeds the five thousand. In it we see Jesus' divinity, his compassion, and his power. That is what it demonstrated to his followers at that time and place. And make no mistake, it also shows us the same thing to us today. But we can also see what it means beyond those things. What other things can we take away from this story as we look at our capital campaign to improve and enhance our physical building?

A capital campaign might make you a little nervous. You might wonder, "How can we do this?" It might seem overwhelming. But then again, look at this scripture. It seemed it would be impossible to feed all those folks with what they had to give, but in spite of that, Jesus was capable of meeting those overwhelming odds. At least one disciple, Peter, seemed doubtful that feeding all those people could get done. Jesus wanted to test his faith and see if he would trust Jesus to come through and not rely only on the resources at hand. And then there was the little boy who handed over what he had, five small loaves of bread and two small fish. A small offering, but it can help turn into more than enough.

So, what does this Bible passage have to do with a capital campaign? FAITH! Have faith in God that he will provide. Have faith that God is capable of meeting our needs. And I don't mean that one Sunday morning we will pull into the parking lot of Calvary and find a pot of gold. But faith that as people of God, we can work together to provide what we need for this project, trusting that God provides. We may not be the wealthiest congregation, but we will have the faith and trust that God will work through us to provide what we need.

I leave you with these three thoughts: Remember, with God all things are possible. If God brings us to it, God will bring us through it. Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

*God of abundance, you have poured out a large measure of earthly blessings:
our table is richly furnished, our cup overflows, and we live in safety and security.
Teach us to set our hearts on you and not these material blessings.
Keep us from becoming captivated by prosperity,
and grant us in wisdom to use your blessings to your glory
and to the service of humankind; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Week 5: Preparing for June 14

Participating in God's work

Mark 12:38-44 Devotional by Laura Aupperle, *stewardship committee*

³⁸ As he taught, he said, "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces ³⁹ and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets! ⁴⁰ They devour widows' houses and for the sake of appearance say long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation."

⁴¹ He sat down opposite the treasury and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. ⁴² A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. ⁴³ Then he called his disciples and said to them, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. ⁴⁴ For all of them have contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."

In this reading, Jesus points out to his disciples that there are people who like to take the best for themselves now and will pay for that behavior later. Jesus also points out to his disciples that there are people who give money in amounts comfortable for themselves to the treasury of their temple. Jesus then points out to his disciples a widow, one who gave two copper coins to the treasury of the temple. He tells his disciples that he knows that she is very poor, and that this amount is all she owns!

This is amazing, how can she do that?

What is Jesus telling us?

I think Jesus is telling us that the widow has faith in God, and knows what is most important in life, and if she can do it....we can too!

*Dear God, our loving creator, you sent your only Son, Jesus Christ,
to teach us what is good, and died on the cross to forgive our sin.
Please help us to continue to grow in our faith and know,
like the widow, what is most important in life.
Let us be generous and share the gifts you have given us,
so Calvary's building will make a difference for our community...
with faith in the future. Amen!*

About the campaign

Building for Community: Faith in the Future is an exciting opportunity for the Calvary community to walk towards our goal of being more physically and spiritually inviting. Thank you for any consideration you put into being part of this season of ministry!

Read more at longislandlutherans.org/campaign



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