

## Thursday, February 12

Scripture Reading: Leviticus 13:1-17

### *Reflection*

The disease translated as "leprosy" might not have been Hansen's disease (what we call "leprosy"). A close reading of Leviticus 13-14 reveals the sick were expected to recover (unlike the incurable, but treatable, Hansen's disease). Quarantine periods were temporary. A priest would inspect and impose the quarantine. Then he would re-inspect the sick at regular intervals to notice any improvement. Notice the power of the priest in Leviticus. He acted not only as a worship leader, but also as a civil leader, judge, and medical practitioner. This all-encompassing role gave the priesthood of Aaron extraordinary powers.

The infected took on mannerisms that warned others of the disease. Torn clothing, lack of proper hygiene, and the call "Unclean! Unclean!" meant to separate the community from those in quarantine. Not only did the infected live outside the community, they were expected to live as if they were in the wild. Appearance and warning gave the notion these lived outside civilization.

As Americans, we pride ourselves on our unique individuality. We have the right to act different. Imagine if different behavior was not a right, but a social pressure. To the contemporaries of Jesus, the ruling of leprosy by a priest was like a unjust prison sentence: isolated lifestyle by infection.

On this day that we celebrate the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Abraham Lincoln we can give thanks that through Lincoln the many seen as "unclean" have been healed. Lincoln's legacy and his public orations brought about the inclusion, not the exclusion of people. Today, on this celebrative day, we remember Lincoln's work and efforts to bring that kind of healing to a world infected with the leprosy of slavery and prejudice and racism.

*Lord God, we give thanks for all the leaders you have raised up to bring healing, justice and wholeness to our broken world. On this day we remember and give thanks for the ways in which you used your servant Abraham Lincoln. Help us to stand for goodness, righteousness and inclusion so that no one is left out and no one is ostracized for full and meaningful participation in this world. Amen.*

*Written by Pastor Paul Olson, Lead Pastor*

## Friday, February 13

Scripture Reading: Acts 19:11-20

### *Reflection*

One morning in Washington D.C., a man began to play a violin in the metro station. He played several Bach pieces and his performance lasted about forty-five minutes. The few that stopped to listen were children, the adults listened in passing. He received about thirty dollars in donations.

The musician's name was Joshua Bell, a world renowned violinist. Two days prior to his subway appearance he had played at a sold out concert in Boston, Massachusetts. Ticket prices averaged one hundred dollars a person. He played some of the world's most complicated violin pieces on a violin that was worth three and a half million dollars.

This true story is about perception. Like Mr. Bell, God is found in unusual places, through unexpected circumstances and people. In this Bible passage the demons do not pay attention to the men. This is because they didn't have the authority even though they tried to cast out the demons in the name of Paul and Jesus. They only listened to Paul because he was the one they expected.

What does it take in your life to have faith? Do you need to see a miracle? Does it have to be the true face of Jesus? Are your eyes and heart truly open to see God at work in your life? Do you have faith because you see or is it your faith that allows you to see?

*Dear Lord, may our faith allow us to see you in new ways,  
through new circumstances and through new people.*

*Amen*

*Written by Mackenzie Steen, Ninth Grade  
Children's Choirs Accompanist*

# Growing Deeper

Daily Devotions  
February 9-13, 2009



Written by the staff of St. John's Lutheran Church

To receive daily devotions by email, send email address to [mbailey@stjohns-springfield.org](mailto:mbailey@stjohns-springfield.org)

St. John's Lutheran Church  
2477 W. Washington, Springfield, IL 62702

## Monday, February 9

Scripture Reading: Acts 14:1-7

### **Reflection**

The recent inauguration of our first black United States President was indeed a momentous day in our nation's history. All the reflections of those interviewed expressed gratitude, hope, and the belief that we can move forward for change. Joy and excitement were palpable everywhere. In retrospect, it is humbling to consider how much suffering and pain and humiliation was borne to bring us to this day. As Paul and Barnabas continued with their preaching, so we the people of this nation have continued in our quest for equality and better lives for all Americans, regardless of the color of their skin. All things are possible when we walk with God.

### **Prayer**

*Dear Heavenly Father, we are so grateful to live in this wonderful country where we are free to express our ideas and opinions without fear. We are so grateful to be able to worship in the churches of our choice without fear of condemnation. May we continue forward from this day in continued pursuit of freedom and equality for all. Let our lives reflect the love of God in all we do. Amen*

*Written by Linda Fairchild  
Chancel Choir Accompanist  
teachlf@springnet1.com*

## Tuesday, February 10

Scripture Reading: Acts 15:36-41

### **Reflection**

Church conflict is nothing new. Even as early as 49 AD, church leaders were already in disagreement with one another. Paul and Barnabas had been partners in ministry. They had been a close team, working side by side. And yet, a disagreement arises between them over whether to invite John Mark to join them on the next leg of their missionary journey. Barnabas thought "yes." Paul thought "no." And that was it. They each went their own separate way. Barnabas, together with John Mark, sets out for Cyprus. Paul, together with Silas, sets out for Syria and Cilicia.

The history of the Christian church has been forged out of one conflict after another. Should we let John Mark go with us or not? Is Jesus fully human or fully divine or both? Are we saved by our works or by our faith? Is slavery approved of or forbidden by the Bible? Is it ok to ordain women or not? Should our worship be traditional or contemporary? Which looks better in the sanctuary—the red carpet or the blue? Yet, through each and every conflict that the church has faced, the church has endured! Why? Because the church is built not on the decisions we humans make, but rather on the solid foundation of Jesus Christ and Christ alone—a foundation that is bigger and stronger than any conflict we Christ's church might face!

As it was for both Paul and Barnabas back in 49 AD and as it is for us still today, Christ alone is the foundation of the church. As long as we remain built up and rooted in him, then no matter what conflicts the church might endure, the church will stand. Christ alone is the source of our church's unity and not how the church may or may not vote on any one particular decision!

In the words of the hymn, "The Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ, her Lord; She is his new creation by water and the Word. From heav'n he came and sought her to be his holy bride; With his own blood he bought her, and for her life he died" (LBW 369).

### **Prayer**

*Lord Jesus, even when we don't always agree with one another, make us one in worship, one in mission, one in ministry, and one in you. Amen*

*Written by Pastor Greg Busboom, Pastor of Outreach and Discipleship*

## Wednesday, February 11

Scripture Reading: Mark 3:7-12

### **Reflection**

Doing the right thing is often made easier when a lot of people are doing it with you. There is comfort in a crowd – safety in numbers. Just look at the people that crowded around Jesus, traveling many miles in an age when travel was not easy. They probably came for a variety of reasons – to be healed, to see what everyone was talking about, or to see the Son of God. Whatever prompted them to start their journey, it was made easier when they were joined by so many others.

For the past 19 years, I have been blessed to be surrounded by an awesome "crowd" – the St. John's Lutheran family consisting of the preschool staff and board, the preschool families, the church staff and the congregation. Time and time again, I have seen God's goodness demonstrated through a kind word, a hug, time volunteered, donations, and especially prayer. I will miss being surrounded by this particular crowd as I change my work status to working only from home. You have all inspired me, encouraged me, and pointed me to Christ in so many different ways. It has been an honor to be walk beside you all. Fortunately, I know that I will not be alone for God promises to never leave me. I will follow Christ's example whenever he sought to be alone and use this time to draw nearer to God. I will keep you all in my thoughts and prayers and I know that you will do the same for me. I thank God for each of you. God bless!

### **Prayer**

*God of Grace, we give you thanks and praise for the great cloud of witnesses that surrounds us, for those past, present, and future who, by their example, keep us focused on you. In Jesus' name.  
Amen*

*Written by Pam Smith  
Preschool Co-Director  
pamsmith@stjohns-springfield.org*