

July 1, 2020 Devotion: Scripture: John 14:2-3 and Song “Big House”

Since we are a bit focused on the theme of death and heaven this week, I have chosen a song that I first learned with the kids in Vacation Bible School a few years ago. It's called “Big House” by Audio Adrenaline and I have used it to explain to children where their loved ones go when they die since it's a confusing concept for them to deal with. The Scripture passage that fits well with this is John 14:2 and 3, where Jesus says, “In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you so. And I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you may be where I am.” The song invites kids (and adults) to a big, house, with lots and lots of rooms and lots and lots of food.” It talks about not knowing a lot about people but that's not important. What is important is knowing Jesus. Nancy and I are thankful that our parents knew Jesus and that they shared him with us. It's why we look forward to seeing our parents again in the big, big, house we call heaven. As sad as we are these days, we still look forward to seeing our parents and loved ones who shared Jesus us with us again. During this Covid-19 time, when people complain all the time about what they've lost, we know that they haven't taken away Jesus and our life eternal in heaven. That what keeps us going. I pray is that way for you. Listen to the song, and be encouraged. Use it as a way to introduce your children to Jesus and his big, big house. May the hope of the resurrection and the big house be with you today and always. URL for Song: ["Big House"](#)

July 3, 2020 Devotion

Tomorrow is the 4th of July, the day we celebrate the freedom that we have as a nation including the right to worship God where we want and when we want. It's been a difficult few months, people are complaining about losing their freedom and others are protesting that because of their race, they've never had the freedom that white people have. Our government seems messed up and we know where to turn. Scripture tells us in Romans 13, “Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.” That doesn't mean there aren't corrupt police and politicians but it should influence the way we protest and how we try to effect change. We are one nation under God and we should look to his word for how we treat other people and how we deal with authority. We hear often how blessed we are as a nation and we are, by his grace, not because of how good we are or how much better we are than others. Our song reminds us of how we ought to look at our nation. It's “My Country Tis' of Thee. The song reminds us of how God is the author of liberty and that our country has been established by God's great might. It puts the emphasis where it should be, on God's grace in granting us these freedoms, not our bumbling attempts to show great we have made this country. We are going to miss a lot of the parades and fireworks tomorrow because of Covid-19, but we

must not forget God's place in all this. He is the author of liberty, won for us by Jesus. It's his great power and might that keeps us going and keeps us free. Take some time to listen to this song and then take time to thank God for giving us this nation.

URL for Song: ["My Country Tis' of Thee"](#)

July 6, 2020 Devotion: Scripture Matthew 26:26-27 and Song "Draw Near and Take the Body of the Lord."

For 3 months, most of us went without communion, partaking of the Lord's Supper, receiving the Body and Blood of our Lord. Many of us struggled with it. We knew we were receiving the same gifts through the Word as we watched our services and heard the Word of God proclaimed but there was something missing. That personal blessing in which we received the Body and Blood of our Lord, the same Body, and Blood that saved us from our sins and will bring us to heaven when the Lord calls us home, as he did my Father-in-law, Bill less than 2 weeks ago. I don't know about you but the first time I received that Body and Blood again after we came back to public Worship, I really believe I appreciated it more. Yesterday, when it was given to me again, I still retained that appreciation and I think I will for a long time. Today's hymn of the day, "Draw Near and Take the Body of the Lord," will be going through my head each time I receive these gifts. I don't receive it because I deserve it but because he suffered on the cross for me. As the song says, "offered was He for greatest and the least, Himself the victim and Himself the priest." Our Scripture verses for today from Matthew 26:26 and 27 record Jesus' words for us that capture clearly what I want to say. First in verse 26, "This is My Body, given for you." Then in verse 27: "This is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured for many for the forgiveness of sins." If you are blessed with the opportunity to receive this gift next Sunday, as the hymn says, "Come forward now with faithful hearts sincere. What a blessed gift His supper is. And it is just for Sunday morning either. Each time during the week when we sin, we remember, this is my Body for you; this is my blood of the covenant given for the forgiveness of your sins- all of your sins. Listen to the hymn now and be assured of that forgiveness and be encouraged, Covid-19 or not.

URL for Song: ["Draw Near and Take the Body of the Lord"](#)

July 8, 2020 Devotion: Scripture John 8:12 and Song “Abide, O Dearest Jesus”

When I was growing up one of the songs we sang in the chapel at our Lutheran School was “Abide, O Dearest Jesus.” It has stuck with me ever since, and I often choose it for use on Sunday mornings at St. Andrew. We are now well into the 4th month of dealing with Covid-19 and it has long past gotten old. There is so much darkness, so much confusion, and so much depression. If we were trying to do it our own, many of us would be joining the protestors, rebelling against our governor’s orders, and just barely getting by. But we as Christ-followers, know that we are not alone. Jesus is abiding with us as he promised. We would be forever in darkness without him. The second verse of the hymn says, “Abide with us heavenly brightness, Among us, precious light.” It connects perfectly with our verse of the day from John 8:12, where Jesus himself says, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” There may not seem to be light at the end of the tunnel for Covid-19 but it doesn’t matter. We walk in the light of Christ, and that will get us through. First, through these Covid-19 days and eventually, as we leave this life when Jesus comes back for us. Abide in Jesus in these Covid-19 days and beyond and you will not walk in the darkness, but in the light of the world, the one who went to the cross for you. Through Jesus, you have overcome the darkness. Through Jesus, heaven awaits. Listen to the hymn and be encouraged.

URL for Song: ["Abide, O Dearest Jesus"](#)

July 10, 2020 Devotion: Scripture Matthew 6:11 and Song “Breathe”

The first two devotions for this week focused on hymns, so today I have chosen a contemporary song, “Breathe” by Michael W. Smith. This beautiful and haunting song has become a comfort to many of the medical workers dealing with the Covid-19 virus as not being able to breathe is one of the most difficult symptoms of the virus. What a great reminder that the air we breathe is a gift from God and something we should never take for granted. The second phrase of this song is “This is my daily bread.” It brings to mind the words of our Scripture for tonight from the Lord’s prayer. It’s Matthew 6:11, Jesus’ words: “Give us today our daily bread.” We mostly think of our daily bread as food or the ability to work to provide us with food that God gives us and that is clearly part of what Jesus is teaching. But Michael W Smith in his song is connecting daily bread with God’s word to us, the Scriptures. And that also is clearly part of the blessings that God gives us. Take time today and in the coming weeks to study God’s Word and be fed. Hear there what Jesus has done for us in his perfect life, death, and resurrection. Here is His Word that he is with us always, even to the close of the age, and be comforted in these Covid-19 times. Breathe in as Michael W. Smith sings, relaxing in God’s truth. Listen to the song and be comforted.

URL for Song: ["Breathe"](#)

July 13, 2020 Devotion: Scripture John 1:1-5 and Song "When Morning Gilds the Skies"

The world around us seems so messed up. Covid-19 continues to dominate how we live our lives. There are so many protests and racial issues to deal with and we just don't know who is right. It's only 4 months until the next Presidential election and we don't seem to have a candidate that stands out as being able to guide us through all of this. If we let ourselves get bogged down in all of this, then it seems like the darkness is winning. The hymn for today, "When Morning Gilds the Skies," points us to the way out. The refrain is "May Jesus Christ be praised." And Jesus certainly is the way out. He was with the Father when the world was created and he came to earth as the "Word" to rescue us from sin, certainly the cause of all these stressful things we are doing with right now. In his Gospel John sets us up for the revealing of Jesus as our Savior by reminding us of the reasons why Jesus is to be praised. He is the "Word" as John 1:1 says, who was in the beginning with the Father at creation. He is the life that comes to light the darkness of sin as verses 4 and 5 points, "the light that, shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it." Our world certainly is the darkness that does not understand the light, Jesus. As Christians, we share Jesus, the light, so that the Holy Spirit might use our testimony to work light in the hearts of those in darkness. As verse 2 of the hymn the darkness fears the chant, "May Jesus Christ be praised but as verse 3 says, believing in him leads to eternal life, where Covid-19 and racism and bad politics and every other problem will be gone. Listen to the hymn and "May Jesus Christ be praised" in your lives so that the darkness can be overcome. The victory is already ours in Jesus. URL for Song: ["When Morning Gilds the Skies"](#)

July 15, 2020 Devotion: Scripture Isaiah 55:10-13 and Song "Almighty God, Your Word is Cast"

As I write this we are waiting for rain. It has been too long since we had any. The grass is turning brown, the crops are stressed, and our flowers need daily watering. Our song and Scripture for today use this metaphor to help us understand our need for God's Word. Without it, we are parched, stuck in our sin, dying of thirst for the Word. The hymn is "Almighty God, Your Word is Cast," and the Scripture passage is Isaiah 55:10-13, our Old Testament lesson from last Sunday. Just like the rain when it comes down, does what it is supposed to, perking up our plants, turning the lawns green again. So does God's Word, as verse 13 says, "Not return empty, but shall accomplish what God desires." As verse 2 of the hymn asks, "let not the old Satanic foe, this sacred see remove", the seed being God's Word, but "give it root in every heart, to bring forth fruits of love. It's only in faith in Jesus that we are able to bear fruit, to share God's love with

others through our words and actions. In these Covid-19 times, there are many opportunities to bear fruit but it's hard because people are afraid- afraid to be near us, afraid to sometimes even come out of the homes. We need to be into God's Word, so that It may accomplish what God desires. And of course, he desires that we trust in His Son, Jesus, so that we can again be in a relationship with Him and that we share His Word with others around us so that they too might bear fruit. Listen to the Hymn and be encouraged, listen to the Word and be encouraged, and pray about ways that the Holy Spirit might guide you to bear fruit, in our lives and as you touch the lives of others.

URL for Song: ["Almighty God, Your Word is Cast"](#)

July 20, 2020 Devotion: Scripture Revelation 3:9 and 4:18 and Song "Bring the Rain"

Another week is beginning and it's more of the same. Covid-19 numbers continue to go up. The mask or no mask controversy continues. No one knows whether schools will be able to welcome students back in person. Unemployment remains high and people continue to protest instead of trying to get along. No matter the weather, it just seems cloudy and rainy as we describe our emotional state. And there seems to be no way out. Some are giving up on God but Mercy Me in today's song, "Bring the Rain," encourages us to go a different way. They encourage us to look back and see how God has been faithful in good times and bad in our life. People ask how can you praise God with all that has gone wrong in your life? And the answer is how can we not continue to praise God? They see God as the shelter from the storm and remain faithful. Our Scripture reading from Revelation 3 and 4 helps us to understand. In verse 3 Jesus says, "I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I see that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and not denied my name." Jesus is that Word and he is telling us to remain faithful to him and he will get us through. All of this temporary. At the end, the chorus of the song echoes the words of Revelation 4:18: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty." And the Scripture verse goes to remind that the Lord was, Is and is to come. He is the same in the past, present, and future. We can learn much in these depressing times about how to trust God and how he can increase our faith as we stay in His Word and spend time in church with Him as we are able. Listen to the words of the song, "Bring the Rain," and see if you aren't encouraged despite these awful times we are going through. It is temporary and we look forward to praising the Lord God, Almighty with the angels dwelling in the house of the Lord forever.

URL for Song: ["Bring the Rain"](#)

July 24, 2020 Devotion: Scripture Psalm 65 and Song "Praise and Thanksgiving"

Early on in Covid-19, we were dealing with issues in getting the things we wanted at the grocery store. Each week, it was something different, flour, even ramen noodles one week and to this day for some reason, chicken gumbo soup. Those days may seem long gone, especially now as summer has come and we have been enjoying our Michigan asparagus, strawberries and blueberries, and more. Before Covid-19 we took so much of that for granted. Not being able to get what we wanted, hopefully, made us appreciate the foods God gives us just a little bit more. Our hymn for today, Praise and Thanksgiving shows us where all the blessings come from. Knowing it an abundant gift from God, the hymn writer asks God to teach us to share. Have you been giving from your bounty to the food banks? I hope so. Much better to do that than to hoard as so many did at the height of the first wave of Covid-19. The song also asks God to bless the labor of those who have worked to get that food to our table. There is much more to getting food than going to Tom's or Meijer's as our kids think. Appreciate those who have worked to provide food for your table. Psalm 65 in verse after verse helps us to appreciate what God has done to provide for us physically as well sending Jesus to forgive our sins. Verse 9 of Psalm 65 says, "You care for the land and water it; you enrich it abundantly. The streams of God are filled with water to provide the people with grain, for you have ordained it. Take some time this weekend to read the whole Psalm. It is amazing how much God has done for us. Then as you appreciate the bounty that is not given because of you deserved it but because it along with Jesus is God's gift, share it. So that as the song says in the last verse, "So that rejoicing With us, all others may know your care. As you listen to the hymn, may your hearts be lifted up, knowing that someone loves you so much that as Psalm 65 says our sins are forgiven and all that we needed is provided.

URL for Song: ["Praise and Thanksgiving"](#)

July 27, 2020 Devotion: Scripture Luke 8:22 to 25 and Song “Jesus Priceless Treasure”

Every week, it seems like I start with the same question. Is it ever going to end? You know what I mean, right? It's the Coronavirus and racial protests and controversy over the election and on and on. It's all about fear and trying to trust ourselves. If you were in church yesterday and sang along on our first hymn, you know the answer. The hymn, of course, is “Jesus, Priceless Treasure” and because of him, our priceless treasure, we know it will all end. He has already won the victory over sin with his death on the cross and his resurrection which proved that what he suffered was enough to pay for our sins. Even though in the short term it seems like we ought to be full of fear, if we look to Jesus he calms our fears as the second verse of the hymn says. It reminded me of the time when Jesus calmed his disciple's fears. In Luke 8, we see the disciples and Jesus out in the boat on the Lake and Jesus went to sleep as he had just completed a long day. A squall came up and it scared the disciples. They woke up Jesus and he calmed their fears by stopping the storm and then he asked, “Where is your faith?” Each week when I ask if it ever is going to end, I don't get down. I have faith that Jesus will get us through and it will end just as the storm did for the disciples. As you listen to the second verse of the hymn, see if what the hymn writer is describing isn't a lot like what we are feeling today. Foes who would molest me, Every heart be quaking, lightning flash and thunders crash. Tough stuff just like we are dealing with. And the ending, though sin and hell assail me, Jesus will not fail me. Look at how Jesus saved the disciples in Luke 8 and how they marveled that even the wind and rain obey him. Jesus will not fail us either. Listen to the hymn and be encouraged. Then read John 8:22 to 25 and see where your faith lies. In Jesus, of course!

URL for Song: ["Jesus Priceless Treasure"](#)

July 29, 2020 Devotion: Scripture Matthew 14:24-31 and Song “Oceans”

The opening words of today's song, “Oceans” by Hillsong pointed me to the Scripture for today very quickly. It's another water miracle for Jesus from Matthew 14. The words of the song, ‘you called me upon the waters, the great unknown, where feet may fail.’ Doesn't that sound like what happened to Peter when Jesus invited him out of the boat to walk with him on the water? And it went well at first, but then like what happens to us at times in these Covid-19 days, he lost sight of Jesus and his faith weakened and he began to sink. There are times today when we do a Peter. He lost sight of Jesus and our faith begins to fail and our feet fail. We are afraid to go out, afraid to talk to people about our faith, afraid of a lot of things. The song talks about keeping my eyes above the waves and as long as Peter did that he was fine. Good advice for us today We need to keep our eyes above the waves of Covid-19, of desperate politicians, of protesting citizens, and especially the temptations of the devil. When Jesus saw Peter begin to sink, he went to him. Jesus treated Peter with grace, and though he chided him for having little faith, he still showed undeserved love and rescued him. When we fail, and we will, God

doesn't give up on us either. Just like Peter, the song reminds us that in the presence of the Savior, our faith will be made stronger. Stop watching the news, spend time in the Word in the presence of the Savior, and life will be different. As always be encouraged by the song and by Jesus' action in Peter's life and realize that Jesus will act in your life in the same way. Keep your eyes above the waves. And trust in Him.

URL for Song: ["Oceans"](#)

July 31, 2020 Devotion: Scripture: Joshua 1:16 and 6:2 and 15-16 and Song: "Bring Me Home (Joshua)"

Today's song, "Bring Me Home (Joshua)" is sung by Michael Tait, a singer first introduced to many of us by Shelley Steffen (now Sousa) when she was a family life intern at St. Andrew quite a few years ago. The Scripture from Joshua, is the conquest of the wall of Jericho by Joshua and the Israelites, shortly after they entered the Promised Land." What's unique about this video is that you don't have to look up the Scripture verses because they are on the screen as the song is introduced. Of course, it wasn't the Israelites and Joshua that knocked down the thick, high walls of Jericho. It was God. As you listen to the song and read the Scriptures, be reminded that it won't be us that knock down the walls of racism and the walls of COVID-19 or any other walls you are facing now, whether it be illness or family issues or financial issues because of job loss or anything else. Only God will bring us home as He did the Israelites in Joshua 6. Only God will bring us home through all of the issues I listed above and more. As we get close to beginning another weekend, remember how God had the Israelites march around the walls of Jericho seven times and he made the walls fall down. Trust God no matter what he tells you to do today, Covid-19 and all. He will bring you home to the promised land. Listen and be encouraged again.

URL for Song: ["Bring Me Home \(Joshua\)"](#)