

September 2, 2020 Devotion: Scripture Isaiah 49:16 and Song "Christ Be My Leader"

Our closing hymn in church last Sunday was "Christ, Be My Leader." With the election season just around the corner, there has been much talk about leaders. The leader or team of leaders will do this if they are elected. This leader will do this if he is reelected. As I have said, more than once, talking or thinking that way is dangerous. All human leaders will fail us sometime. Instead, we ought to be singing "Christ Be My Leader." He turns the darkness to day as the hymn says. The hymn supports the words of Isaiah 49:16 where the Messiah to come is predicted with these words, "He will keep you in the palm of his hand." As you listen to and watch the hymn video, watch for the Scripture to appear behind the words of the hymn in the video. In the midst of all we are going through, how important it is that "Jesus keeps in the palm of His hand." We should be praying as we look toward who we will vote for, "Christ Be My leader." Look to his teaching and see which human leaders are letting Christ be there God is their platform and leading. Pray that in voting you are doing God's will and not your own. The third verse of the hymn encourages us to trust in the Lord and that is what will get us through whatever life is bringing you right now. Listen to the hymn and depend on Jesus not yourselves or the present or future leaders after the election.

URL for song: ["Christ Be My Leader"](#)

September 4, 2020 Devotion: Scripture Romans 12:0 and Song "See a Victory"

Whether it be Covid-19, racism, the economic downturn that has cost so many their jobs, or dealing with a difficult illness, it is easy to get down and wonder if we will ever win a victory. All these things are caused by the evil that came into the world with sin in the Garden of Eden. And there it was all about Adam and Eve putting themselves first. My beginning sentence of today's devotion reflects that evil. Did you see it? It's in the last part of the sentence, "we wonder if we will ever win a victory." As so often happens, we need to be reminded that it's not about us but about what God does for us. Our song for today is "See a Victory" by Elevation Worship. The chorus repeats, "the Battle belongs to the Lord, I'm gonna see a victory." And later in one of the last verses, the songwriters remind that God turns all evil into good for us. We need to focus on staying away from evil, choosing what is good. As Romans 12:9, part of our Epistle from last Sunday says, "Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil, cling to what is good." We are tempted to look at the evil in the world and become afraid that evil will win, we must as well give in. But Paul says, no, cling to what is good and that certainly is God and the victory he won for us by sending Jesus to the cross for us. This weekend is Labor Day and it's good we honor those who labor for our good. But on Sunday, come to church and praise the one who labored for us the most, Jesus, of course. He went to the cross for us that we might "see the victory." What a comforting thought!. Listen to the hymn and come to church Sunday (or watch the recording) and "see the victory."

URL for song: ["See a Victory"](#)

September 7, 2020 Devotion: Scripture: I Corinthians 15:58 and Song: “Your Labor Is Not in Vain”

Today is Labor Day, the day our country honors those who have labored on behalf of our country to make it what it is today. Normally, it is a day we honor our Labor Unions and what they have done for our country and its workers. It's not often a day that we spend much time talking about God and what he has done for us in giving us the talents and abilities we have so they are able to labor and contribute to what makes America special. The fact of the matter is without God, our Labor would be in vain. As Christians though, we aren't really working for our country or the Labor Unions or whoever else we would like to please. Any of those things will disappoint us when it comes to receiving satisfaction or honor or whatever else we strive for. Our Scripture for today, I Corinthians 15: 58, puts it this way, “Therefore, my brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.” Our song for today echoes that verse. It is called appropriately, “Your Labor Is Not in Vain.” It talks about how from an earthly standpoint, your labor doesn't always seem to benefit. It uses the farmer as an example, pointing out that often the rock and other issues get in the way of the farmer's labors working out well. Then they go on to point out as Paul does in I Corinthians that in the Lord that is not the case. The songwriters remind us that God has called us by name and because of what Jesus has done for us, that call leads in faith to forgiveness and heaven, things with meaning, not in vain. Don't get me wrong, we should with our country honor our laborers and all they do for us. From an earthly standpoint, they deserve it. But we can't earn anything with God. The greater lesson of today is that in Jesus, our labor for the Lord is not in vain. Listen to this haunting song and its message and maybe, just maybe, Labor Day will never be the same.

URL for Song: ["Your Labor Is Not In Vain"](#)

September 9, 2020 Devotion: Scripture Isaiah 6: 3-5 and Song “Lord Jesus Christ Be Present Now”

Today's hymn was our opening hymn last Sunday and is often used to begin services and actually is a great hymn to begin any day. We invite Jesus to be present in our lives and in doing so are reminded that we aren't alone as we face the trials and troubles of the day, especially during these Covid-19 times. Verse 3 of the hymn talks about “Holy, Holy, Lord most High and ends with the words, “We shall see you face to face. It reminds us of Isaiah 6: 3-5 where Isaiah speaks the same words about God being “Holy, Holy, Lord Most High and then shares how afraid and undeserving he is and that he's afraid that God will destroy him if he sees him face to face because of this. God sends an angel with a coal to touch his lips and tells him that because this has touched your lips, “your guilt is taken away and you for atoned for.” Because of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, in faith we will see our Lord face to face without fear. That should work for us as we fear life in these times. There is no reason to fear, Jesus has taken care of our greatest fear, death and he will overcome all the fears that plague us now. Verse 2 of our

hymn explains how God takes care of our doubts as well which is also important in these days. So listen to the hymn and see how it echoes the Scripture verse and be reminded how Jesus being present now will get us through the day.

URL for Song: ["Lord Jesus Christ, Be Present Now"](#)

September 11, 2020 Devotion: Scripture Matthew 22:37 and Song "Love God, Love People"

One of the side effects of Covid-19 that many people don't realize is that it is causing many people to focus on the wrong way to come to God is by trying harder and the way to overcome the Covid-19 issues is to try harder. Danny Gokey has a relatively new song that explains what will make a difference in overcoming all this and the title of the song is very descriptive. It's "Love God, Love People." It's based on Jesus' words from Matthew 22:37-40 where he talks about the 2 most important commandments. The first, of course, is "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." And the second he says is this, "Love your neighbor as yourself." Hence, the title of the song, "Love God, Love People." One of the early verses of the song, puts it this way, "We're living in a world that always breaking, but if we want to find a way to change it, it all comes down to this: "Love God, Love People." All the mask plans, all the economic stimuli, all the politicians have to offer, all the CDC has to offer, none of them will work in changing Covid-19 or all the problems in our world. Jesus' life, death, and resurrection are the answer to all of them. And his words in Matthew 22 about loving the Lord and loving your neighbor are our response to what Jesus has done for us. It seems too simple, "Love God, Love People," but really it's not. Listen and read along with the words of the song and set your heart on his advice. You won't be disappointed.

URL for Song: ["Love God, Love People"](#)

September 14, 2020 Devotion: Scripture Psalm 23 and Song "The Lord's My Shepherd"

Today's devotion is #103 since I started writing and publishing them back in March. Like Covid-19 it seems like forever ago that I started them with the idea that in a month or two we'd be done with this and ... Oops, was I wrong about that? Much has changed in what is now the 7th month of Covid-19 and much has stayed the same. In many of these devotions, I have listed the things we've lost and maybe it's time to lay that theme to rest for a while. Some of the lost things are back, at least for now, and mostly that's a good thing. Our Sunday worship services have been back for a while and last Thursday we went back to in-person Bible Study, at least for some, and we continue to zoom for those who can't or won't come back, and last Sunday we started in person Sunday School. Portland schools and others are back to in-person learning, at least for now and that is good too. Some say the reason we are back is because of wearing masks and social distancing and a few other things but as Christians, we know better, it's by the grace of God that those things are happening. It's not because of what we've done but because as today's song sings, "The Lord's My Shepherd." And the Scripture., of course,

that goes with it is the 23rd Psalm which starts in verse 1, "The Lord is my Shepherd." It seemed like evil has been on every side but trusting in God alone as the song says, we fear no evil as Psalm 23 says. The Shepherd's rod and staff they comfort us. Listen to the words of the song and see if they don't comfort you and remember God's goodness and mercy will be with you every day of your life and you will live in the house of the Lord forever. We don't do any of this alone and it's God's grace and mercy that have given us back some of the things we have been missing. Listen and take comfort.

URL for Song: ["The Lord's My Shepard"](#)

September 16, 2020 Devotion: Scripture Luke 15:11-31 and Song "Love Moved First"

With everything that's been going on, sometimes the best solution seems to be running away and just giving up on everything. Sometimes it seems like it might be good to run away even from God because he just doesn't seem to be giving us we want. Today's song from Casting Crowns called "Love Moved First" reminds us that even though it seems like God should or even has given up on us it's just not real. The title of the song: "Love Moved First," reminds us even when we were rebelling and running away, God did not give up on us. because of our sin, we can't move toward God knew that and moved first in sending Jesus for us and in giving us the Holy Spirit to place faith in our broken hearts and bring us to him. He moved first because we can't. It reminds me of the Scripture passage for today from Luke 15:11-31, the verses often called the Parable of the Lost Son. The son took his inheritance and ran away from his father and squandered it. Take some time to read the whole passage and see if you don't see yourself in the lost Son. He tried to come to his senses and went home, practicing his excuse speech, wanting to ask to be a servant in this Dad's home because he didn't deserve more. What did the Dad, he moved first, seeing his son coming down the road and didn't give him a chance to give his speech, receiving him in a big hug and putting on a feast for him? Love moved first in this father, just as God the Father moved first, in sending Jesus for us. Listen to this whole song and see if you don't see the lost son echoed in the words and most likely yourself as well. This is a beautiful song that we can relate to. It helps us see God at all times, even in these Covid-19. The parable of the Lost Son and the words and music of this song, both of great comfort in our sinful lives.

URL for Song: ["Love Moved First"](#)

Devotion: Scripture I Corinthians 13 and Song “Love Never Fails”

As you read this, Nancy and I will be leaving with the rest of our immediate family for an event long-awaited in our family. Tomorrow, Sarah, our middle daughter will be married to the love of her life, Chris. Much has changed since Chris proposed. The wedding venue and most of the guests are gone. There will be only 19 witnesses at P. J. Hoffmeister State Park on the beach instead of close to 200. No party afterward or at least not until a year from now if Covid-19 is under control. But that doesn't mean God's love has failed Chris and Sarah and our families. Love in God continues to be patient and kind and as our text for today, I Corinthians 13:8 reminds all of us, "Love never fails." And Brandon Heath knew that when he wrote the song for today, and so it's his theme throughout the song along with the rest of I Corinthians 13. So please pray for Sarah and Chris and all who have attempted to get married during Covid-19. Pray that they know that God's love in Jesus Christ will get them through, that faith and hope are important but as Paul tells us, the greatest of faith, hope and love is love. All of us who are married know that we fail each other but God's love never fails. Christ is always there to share this love for us shown in all its glory on the cross so that each time we fail, in faith we are forgiven and tomorrow is another fresh day to start to love all over again. What a special thing that on a wedding day, we are reminded of God's love. Remember your wedding day if you are married and God's love for you, that day and every day of your life together. What a blessing for our family tomorrow will be. Listen to the beautiful words of Brandon's song and rejoice with us even you aren't able to be with us in person.

URL for Song: ["Love Never Fails"](#)

September 23, 2020 Devotion - Scripture: Hebrews 9:27-28; Song: “Living Hope”

Today's song is called "Living Hope" by Phil Wickham. It's a beautiful reminder of what Jesus did for us. Near the beginning of the song he sings, "The God of ages stepped down from glory, to wear my sin and bear my shame." He sings clearly about what the writer of Hebrews shared in chapter 9 verses 27 and 28: "Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people." The hymn goes on to remind us that Christ did that on the cross, of course, He sings, "the cross has spoken, I am forgiven, the King of Kings calls me his own." Wow. With all the isolation due to Covid-19 and all the stress of finances, school and no school, and more, we often feel like we are alone and not loved. Satan uses all these things to tempt us to think this way. As the song says, it's not true, you are somebody. You are God's children, claimed by the Kings of Kings and he calls you His own. Shake off the situations you are involved in that cause you to feel isolated and alone

and listen to the words of the song and the Scriptures. Christ was sacrificed once to cover your sins. You are His and will live forever, Covid-19 or not. Be at peace as you listen to this beautiful song and share that peace with others you meet.

URL for "Living Hope" [Phil Wickham - Living Hope \(Lyrics\)](#)

September 25, 2020 Devotion - Scripture: Luke 1:37; Song "Miracles"

It's Friday of another long week and Covid-19 is still not over. We might be ready to give up. Often when I meet people feeling this way, in desperation they say, "I need a miracle," almost like it's not really possible but knowing there's no other way. That's because we are looking to ourselves or others to solve our problems whether it's Covid-19 or relationships or finances or illness. You name it, someone is feeling that way today because of these and other situations they are in. Colton Dixon, from American Idol sings a song called "Miracles" that speaks to this. He sings that miracles are more than a coincidence and that they happen from above. Of course, as Christians we know that miracles do happen because God loves us. The greatest miracle of all was that he sent Jesus to die for our sins so that we can live forever with him. And the God who was willing to go that far for us is capable of providing miracles. That's the message of hope I have for you this Friday. On our own we will want to give up but with God's help miracles happen. It might be a small one like making it through another week, it might be the biggest miracle of all, Jesus dying on the cross for us and being raised from the dead as proof that what he suffered covers our sin. Jesus' mother Mary, was in tough situation, pregnant and not married, still a virgin when the Angel came to her in Luke 1. She asked the angel, "How can this be?" The angel talked about how the Holy Spirit would come upon her and the power of the Most High would overshadow her. The same Holy Spirit and the power of the Most High are with you too. In Luke 1:37, the angel explains it all with these words, "For nothing is impossible with God." That would be the answer to Colton Dixon's question is our song as well. "How can miracles happen?" "Nothing is impossible with God", right? So on another dismal Friday during Covid-19, be encouraged. A miracle happened in your life when God claimed you. Covid-19 will over someday even if God has to perform a miracle. In the meantime, listen to the song, and be ready to answer the question, "How can miracles happen?" "With God, nothing is impossible."

URL for "Miracles" [Miracles - Colton Dixon \(Lyrics\)](#)

September 28, 2020 Devotion - Scripture: Job 19:25; Song “From All That Dwell Below the Skies”

As I've said before each week I like to choose at least one traditional hymn for my song devotions. This week it is "From All That Dwell Below the Skies," the hymn of praise for our service for next Sunday. I don't know about you but I like to lay on a blanket at night and look up at the skies, to admire the beauty that God has created, and to think about what lies above, the place where I think God is. With all the smoke from the forest fires on the West Coast, the sky has been different, full of oranges and reds especially as the sun goes down. Life below the skies has been different as well during this Covid-19 time. We are so frustrated with life that sometimes we forget to sing God's praises, maybe even thinking that God has abandoned us. This hymn reminds us that despite the pandemic, God continues to be with us and take care of us and is worthy of our praises. We should be like Job during these times. The devil with God's permission was doing everything he could to take away Job's faith. He lost his possession, his wife, his family- all the things most of us hold dear. But he did not despair. In job 19:25, he says those famous words that became an Easter song. "I know that my Redeemer lives and that in the end, he will stand upon the earth." What faith! Easter hadn't even happened and he still believed. The first verse of our hymn says, "Let the Redeemer's name be sung, Through every land by every tongue." Job was able to do that and should we. Jesus lived the perfect life we can't, died as punishment that we deserved, and was raised to prove that what he did was enough to put us right with God through the forgiveness he won for us. So Covid-19 and any other problem, we can still sing God's praises. This is temporary, as the hymn says, his mercy is eternal. Listen to the hymn and sing along. Praise the one who has saved us, pandemic or not.

[Hymn of the Week - From All That Dwell Below the Skies](#)

September 30, 2020 Devotion - Scripture: Romans 8:38-39; Song “The God Who Stays”

How many times have you talked to God and said something like: “If I were you... and then proceeded to in some way or another to try to convince God to change how things are in your life? It might be about a particular sin you can’t stop doing, it might be about a circumstance you are in- in a relationship or with your health or at work. You might even have said, If I were you, God, I would work away from me because I can’t get it together. Matthew West posed that question to God in his song, “The God Who Stays” He realized as he suggested to God, “If I were you,” as I think all of us do that it’s good that we aren’t God. He knows best because he is perfect. And yet he stays. As Matthew sings, “Nothing I have ever done, can separate me from the God who stays.” It reminds us of what Paul writes in our Scripture verse from Romans 8: “For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future; nor any powers; neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is Christ Jesus our Lord.” Whoa! Nothing. Not as Matthew West sings, anything I have done, not Covid-19 or bad health or struggles keeping a job. You fill in what you think might and God will say nope, Nothing! What a great thing to believe. Be comforted by these words of Paul and be encouraged by the song, “The God Who Stays.”

[The God Who Stays - Matthew West \(Lyrics\)](#)