

Devotion April 23, 2020 “Church and Work”

Let's start with a word of prayer which comes from the season of Easter, in the *Book of Common Worship Daily Prayers*. Let us pray.

O God, who appointed the day for labor and the night for rest: Grant that we may rest in peace and quietness during the coming night so that tomorrow we may go forth to our appointed labors. Take us into your holy keeping, that no evil may befall us nor any ill come near our home. When at last our days are ended and work is finished, grant that we may depart in your peace, in the sure hope of that glorious kingdom where there is day without night, light without darkness, and life without shadow of death forever; through Jesus Christ, the Light of the world. Amen

Good afternoon. I took Buddy for a walk last night in the snow! Oh, my goodness! He looked at me as if saying, “you’ve got to be kidding me!” My reaction was “this is not funny”!

Today we finish the week with the last two elements of a Rule of Life: church and work. I remind everyone that this has been a very general overview and I hope that it has given you some ideas about your life and faith.

CHURCH

Participation and worship
Friendships and community
Service and mission

I have selected Psalm 100 for the element for worship:

“Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations. (NIV)

Worship! Joy! Gladness! Joyful Songs! While we shelter in our homes during “these days” we miss worshipping in the church building, we miss singing joyful songs, we miss the joy and gladness of worship. Some may say we do not have much to be joyful about. Yes, we do! We should remember that the LORD is God, who made us, **we are His, the sheep of His pasture, and that the Lord is good AND His love endures forever, His faithfulness continues through all generations!**

We have discovered that we can continue to worship God from wherever we are; granted that it is not what we are accustomed to. We look at our laptop, computer screens, or our smartphones and watch Pastor Linda try to make the experience positive. Many are struggling with this notion of on-line worship, and many have been doing this for years and it is their norm. In our Rule of Life, we might explore our thoughts on worship. At St. Andrew's we have a worship committee that strives to bring the best possible worship experience to everyone through beautiful music, liturgy, proclamation of God's Word, and celebration of The Lord's Supper. We have dedicated members who bring a message for the children in creative ways.

What in worship is the most important thing to you? While in seminary I took a preaching practicum where we had to create worship services, with one service celebrating The Lord's Supper. One of the students thought way outside the box! She had a goblet on the communion table with a bunch of red grapes and an unusual type of bread. We were instructed to line up and do the electric slide, a line dance. The music was Cool and the Gang, "Celebration" and we were to do the electric slide down the aisle, take a piece of bread and a grape and slide back to our seats. Oh, dear! There was a long discussion following, about the appropriateness of 'celebrating' The Lord's Supper in this manner. The class decided it was not appropriate.

I tell you this story to encourage you to think about our sacraments, our worship, and our location for worship. Is it possible to do a little thinking outside our boxes about what could be appropriate and meaningful and a little different? I am not suggesting doing the electric slide or serving grapes instead of juice! We may decide that this online worship is about as far outside the box we are willing to go!

This is a quote I used in Monday's devotion, from the Northumbria Community: "A rule of life, it says 'this is who we are'; it says this is our story; and it reminds us of those things God has put on our hearts, calling us back to our foundations."

What are our foundations and what has God put on our hearts? Each generation has ideas about worship. What are new ideas that might help us be more joyful?

WORK

Calling/vocation

Current position and responsibilities

Workplace relationships

Education, personal development, and coaching

Retirement

WORK!! Now here is a topic that will bring all kinds of emotions. I have selected scriptures from Colossians, Romans and a Psalm regarding work.

Colossians 3:23 (NIV)

"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the LORD, not for men."

Romans 8:28 (NIV)

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him."

The words "calling" or "vocation" are interesting words to describe "work". They describe a work that some may think has a higher meaning. I was called into the ministry, teachers are called to teach, nurses are called to care for and heal, but what about someone working at a big box store? A friend and I were talking years ago while we were still in high school. He told me that his dad hated his job and that it was difficult to understand why his dad stayed with the company. Back in the 60's and 70's people did not change jobs as often as they do now. Colossians 3:23 tells us to "work at it with all your heart, as working for the LORD, not for men."

The scripture from Romans speaks about God working for the good of those who love Him. This is a great scripture, reminding us that God is in **all things**, and God is taking care of us.

Psalm 71:18 (NIV)

“Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, O God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your might to all who are to come.”

RETIREMENT! Many in our congregation are retired. Some people look forward to retirement and some dread it. The thing is, we may not do the 9-5 job anymore, but this Psalm speaks of **sharing or declaring the power of God to the next generation.**

Work, retirement, and church can go hand in hand. We see church members using their job skills to be a part of ministry. I am amazed at the volunteers of St. Andrew's! During this time of staying home people have stepped up and done creative things to help others get through this lonesome time.

The five elements of a Rule of Life that I have shared with you are basic jumping off points. I hope that you are able to see some things that will help you think about your own faith and life. Perhaps you will find new ways or rediscover old ways that help you define who you are, and how you live your life. The first thing to remember; **you are a child of God, and God loves you!**

Thank you for joining me. Next week we will return to more traditional devotions!

May Almighty God, bless, preserve, and keep us, this day and forevermore. Amen

Pastor Linda