

Devotion from the past ... 2006

Extended Reading: [1 Peter 3:8–22](#)

Through Thick and Thin

“Through thick and thin, keep your hearts at attention, in adoration before Christ, your Master. Be ready to speak up and tell anyone who asks why you’re living the way you are, and always with the utmost courtesy” (1 Peter 3:15 *MSG*).

The Lord be with you.

At this time of year and in many places, courtesy, even *sans* utmost, is not a Lutheran characteristic. And if we were to ask some why they’re living the way they are, the answer would likely be rude. Then again, each of us has our own way of living, and sometimes ..., well, it’s always easier to talk about the sins of others!

It seems that as March slips into its final days, tempers, irritations, mean spirits, and other examples of Lutherans behaving badly increase way faster than the spring temperatures waddling toward summer. As congregations face uncertain funding, church workers worry about job security, parents suffer from winter’s incarceration with children who’ve had spring fever since December, and LEA readers toil through extra long devotional sentences ... ah, we tend to lose focus on what is really important. Or, at least, we get sidetracked!

Scripture says “through thick and thin ...” we are to retain our focus. And our primary focus? No, it’s not students, church council, or whirling dervishes held captive in the bodies of young children. It’s not the functional flurry that precedes Holy Week services, Easter breakfasts, Confirmation services, spring plays, and next year’s budget. Our primary focus must remain on Christ, our Master.

No other focus can keep us headed in the right direction. Conforming life to Christ’s principles of unconditional love and free forgiveness brings about reasons for others to ask why you’re living the way you are. You live the way you are because Christ lived and died and rose—all for you and the other sinners of the world.

One of the more difficult aspects of being a church worker is living the way of Christ, especially as we interact with others who are supposed to be living the way of Christ too but abandon the concept for whatever reasons. These are the thorns in the rose garden that Jesus never promised His disciples. These are the people and situations that discourage many church workers and sometimes drive them high speed away from ministry. These are among the devil’s considerable collection of wiles.

We need to push aside all that would distract us from our God-given mission—keep our hearts at attention—as it says in today’s Bible reading. And when we have trouble getting around bitterness and over obstacles, we might remind ourselves that Jesus did exactly the same for us even when we preferred the devil’s wiles to the Spirit’s sanctification.

If times get tough this spring, one of the best strategies to keep your focus on Jesus is to sing that simple, childhood song—the one with focus clear enough that even a preschooler understands. Why don’t you sing or hum it now: “Jesus Loves Me, This I Know.” (Of course, if you want something a bit more complex, try “What a Friend We Have in Jesus.” But you’ll probably need a tissue.)

Praise to You, Lord Christ for keeping Your focus on us as You lived, died, and returned to life!

Pray. Dear Holy Spirit, continue Your work of sanctification in us. Help us live in such a way that others wonder how we do it. Then give us the courteous words to tell them. Amen.

Written by Ed Grube
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*Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.
(Jude 24–25)*