



One in Christ
Lutheran parish

ONE VOICE



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Pastor Randy Baldwin & Pastor Bill Peters

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From the Pastor's Desk

"For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you, a future with hope." Jeremiah 29:11



This verse came to mind as I sat down to write this column. It is the verse that is inscribed upon the key chains I give to our high school graduates. As we honor the graduates in a worship service and I hand them a key chain, with this verse, I instruct them to put their car key or their dorm room key upon this key chain. So every time they grab this key and see the key chain, they know the Lord is always with them and so is their church family. This verse is helpful as you achieve one



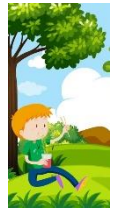
milestone in your life and are ready to begin a new adventure. Just think for a moment, most of our high school graduates grew up in our communities. They went to the same school. They could greet their elementary teachers in the hallway at a chance meeting. There is a comfortable rhythm they knew at school. They knew the same classmates. Knew what to expect from their teachers and Superintendent and Principal and their coaches. They worked hard to achieve their goals in academics, in sports, music, speech, drama and more. Now they are ready for the next step in their lives. Some of the plans have been put together. Some have chosen which college they want to attend next fall. Some know their roommates they will have when they attend college. Some are making plans to enter the military or the work force. Even though they have an idea about their plans, a skeletal structure, there is still a lot of unknowns. Will they like living away from home? Will their study habits be up to the new challenge of college? Will they make new friends? Will they like their professors and understand their expectations? The same is true as they enter the military and work force. What will it be like? Will I be up to the challenge? Who will be there to support me?

All of us can have these times when suddenly the present is changing for us. We have seen recently in our community a company going out of business and some of our brothers and sisters in Christ who had worked there twenty or thirty years, had to find a new job. What about the friendships that were formed through the years? Where will I find a new job? What will be the expectations? Some of the same questions come up when a person retires. You know, the routine for years. Suddenly in retirement, the routine is gone. You determine your schedule. How will you fill your days after the first two weeks fell like a vacation and then what? For farmers they know every season is different. Will it rain in time? Will there be hailstorms? Will there be a harvest?

When we find ourselves at these turning points of change in our lives, it is good to hear from the Lord, *"For surely, I know the plans I have for you says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope."* The Lord first spoke this promise in the letter from Jeremiah to the

Children of Israel, who know found themselves to be in exile, captive to the Babylonians, living in Babylon. They are a thousand miles from home. The Temple was destroyed. Their king was taken into captivity, along with many of their leaders. They are surrounded by people who speak a different language and their cultures and religions are foreign to them. They are taunted by their new neighbors as they ask, "Why do you want to keep worshipping your God, when our gods were stronger than yours, otherwise you wouldn't be here?" Jeremiah sends a word from the Lord, a word of hope. Jeremiah writes that the people should settle in Babylon. Jeremiah instructs that they should go ahead; build houses, plant gardens, and eat what they produce. Sons and daughters should marry and start their families. Work hard for the welfare of the city, for if things are going well in the whole city, it will go well with them as well. Then the Lord declares his promise that he has plans for them, a future with hope.

I remember at least two milestones in my life, when I was wondering what my future would hold in store. In my last year at Iowa State, most of my classes were in two different buildings, that were quite close. In the spring, I ate my sack lunch that I had packed and sat under a tree in a grassy area not too far from my classroom buildings. I reminisced about my college years, and I appreciated the time I spent there. Now I knew that was going to come to an end in a few weeks. I asked myself, and the Lord in prayer, "Where am I going to be living in a couple of weeks? What kind of job will I have? Will I make new friends? Will I enjoy the new adventures?" I asked these questions several times before I graduated. A few weeks later, I discovered the Lord's plan. I got a job at Catholic Charities in Mason City as a Social Worker. I was able to live out a goal of sharing an apartment with my Uncle Bob. I made good friends. About three years later, I was working a summer job as a chaplain in a Boy Scout camp, not too far from Ames. I knew in a couple of weeks, I would be heading for Washington D.C. for a semester of seminary. I found my grassy spot under the same tree. I asked the same questions from three years ago, "What is going to be like living in D.C.? Will I like it? Will I make new friends? Will I enjoy the professors? Will I live up to the expectations for me as a student? Then I remembered that I had asked these questions before and how God had answered them with many blessings. I knew God would bless me again, for God had plans for me, a plan of a future with hope. As we experience big changes in our lives, take a moment to remember God's love and faithfulness. God has a plan for you, a future with hope.



Pastor Randy



WANDERINGS AND WONDERINGS



Mother's Day ... Father's Day ... on these are days we celebrate our parents. And as parents, we reflect on our roles as father and mother. Not everyone has children, but most of us have or had the opportunity to be a parent-like figure in the life of someone near us – as a neighbor, a relative, a Sunday School teacher ... the list goes on. It is one of the most important callings/ vocation that God has given us.

Using this broad understanding of the “children”, what do we want for our children? What we want for our children is what Jesus wanted for his disciples - peace, strength, confidence that will allow them to stand tall in the midst of the challenges of life. As Jesus prepares his disciples for his departure, he does what is necessary for every parent, he gets ready to “launch” them.

Christ wanted his disciples to have a sense of peace when he was no longer physically standing alongside them. He promises to never leave them ... he promises to send another, the Holy Spirit ... but this experience would be different than walking down the road side-by-side. He didn't want them to be afraid. He was sending them out into a hostile world.

What I'm about to reflect on, speaks to us as parents to our children. But more importantly, it helps us understand what God wants for us, as God's children.

First of all, we tell them who they are and that we love them. When they have a strong sense of identity and a sense of self-worth, they are on the path to “kingdom” peace.

The story is told of growing up in grandmother's house, “You know, in my Nana's house there were no mirrors.” Her friend asked her, “Well, how did you know what you looked like?”

“Well,” she said, “my Nana told me. Every morning I would get up and get dressed and comb my hair, and then I would go to Nana and I would say, ‘How do I look?’ And she would tell me. She would tell me I was beautiful. She said my skin was smooth and golden brown, kissed by the sun, and she said my eyes shone like silver moonbeams. In my Nana's house, there were no mirrors, so I saw myself through my Nana's eyes who loved me and the beauty of everything was in her eyes.”

Secondly, we gift them with “kingdom” peace when we help them develop a sense of responsibility. We do our children no favor when we deprive them of the opportunity of contributing to the family's well-being. How will they discover that they are capable unless we require them to try their hand at tasks around the house? How will they develop the discipline they will need to succeed in life if we do not set expectations for them? Some parents fail their children because it is easier to avoid conflict than it is to teach them to pick up their clothes, clean their rooms, help with the housework. Such

tasks are necessary, however, for them to be healthy, happy, productive adults.

Such it is needed to develop a sense of “kingdom” when we help establish their identity and help them develop a sense of responsibility.

But, most important of all, we help them develop “kingdom” peace when we help them develop a sense of God's presence in their lives.

Pastor Walter Wangerin tells how his mother helped him find God.

He writes of a childhood crisis of faith. For a long time, he thought he was the only person in his church who couldn't see Jesus. His mother took him to church every week. He noticed the joy and peace that radiated from the church members'. He wanted to meet this Jesus they talked about. But he had never seen Jesus in his church. So little Walter set out on a quest to find Jesus.

He searched all over his Sunday School classroom, but found no signs of Jesus. He crawled under the pews, but still didn't spot Jesus. He poked his head in the pastor's study. He even sneaked up to the pulpit and looked into this inner sanctum. No Jesus.

Finally, little Walter thought of one room, holy and mysterious, into which he had never dared venture. The ladies' rest room. That must be the place where Jesus hung out. So that Sunday, Walter worked up his courage and sneaked into the ladies' rest room. He checked all the stalls, but Jesus was nowhere to be found. Walter returned to the sanctuary just in time for Communion. Ordinarily, he paid little attention to this sacred ritual. But this time, he noticed how peaceful and happy his mother looked after eating the bread and drinking from the cup. He leaned in close to her, sensing that she bore the answer to his quest. “Mama, what is that?”

She tried to deflect his attention, but he wouldn't give up. “What is that, Mama? What is that smell?”

She finally replied, “Oh, son, that is Jesus. It is Jesus inside of me.” Little Walter finally understood a tiny piece of the mystery -Jesus was living inside his mama.

Some of us probably wouldn't have found Jesus if he hadn't lived inside our Mama or our Papa or our grandparents or some other loving adult. That's how we normally come to Christ, we come through the influence of someone very close to us whom we love and admire.

And so the question ... the challenge ... the calling – can a child sense Jesus in your life? Can another person find faith in your witness? What we want for our children is the same thing Jesus wanted for his disciples - a reality ... a peace ... a hope ... a faith that the world cannot give nor take away. We can help them with that by helping them have a sense of who they are, by helping them develop a sense of responsibility and by showing them Jesus in our own lives.

Wanderings and Wonderings, Pastor Bill Peters