

**Devotions for the Week of May 6, 2018**  
**6th Sunday Of Easter**  
**North East United Methodist Church**  
**By Rev. Dr. Drew M. Christian**

**Sunday, May 6, 2018**

**Read Galatians 5:22 & John 15: 1-17.**

The fruit of the Spirit...what a wonderful gift God has for each one of us who believe and who walk in the Spirit, allowing God to lead them on this journey called life. Paul, in his letter to the Galatians, contrasts the fruit of the Spirit with the works of the flesh. Verses 19-21 talk of sexual sins, sins connected with pagan religion, and sins of drunkenness. These, works of the flesh, are what happen when we try to do things on our own; we try to make it through life without God. Without God it is easy to follow our feelings at the moment, look for the easy way out, deciding on whatever is most pleasurable. These actions eventually lead us to sin and to personal pain, guilt, and heartache.

In contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is a gift God gives us when we allow God to control our lives, when we surrender to Him and allow Him to work in and through us. Our decisions are no longer based on what feels right at the moment but on what God's Word has taught us. Following God leads us away from poor decisions and sinful acts of pleasure and toward love, peace, joy, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

**Read John 15: 1-17.** Christ is the vine; we are the branches. In order to stay alive, to not fall into the "*works of the flesh*" that lead to guilt, heartache, pain, and cause us to hurt those around us that we are called to love, we must stay

connected to God and His Word. The branch gets its nourishment from the vine; we get our nourishment from God, not the world. We must stay connected. Are you plugged into the vine? Are you plugged into God on a daily basis? Are you allowing Him to lead you and guide you on this journey?

In verse 11, Jesus explains that He has shared with us the truth about God being the vine and that we are the branches, so that we would understand the need for connection. He says, *“These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.”* Even going to the cross, even being persecuted and run out of towns, even seeing his disciples betray him, Jesus had within an inner joy, an inner peace, *“thy will be done,”* because He knew whose He was, what His mission was, and to whom He belonged. He knew that nothing could separate Him from the love of God, His Father. Jesus offers that same joy that He experienced knowing intimately His Father in heaven.

We can experience that joy and peace, regardless of our outside circumstances, if we allow God to move in and lead our lives. We must turn from the world and turn to God, getting our nourishment from Him, feeding on His Word, drinking deeply of Him in prayer. It is there, with Him, that we will receive direction that we will be guided away from the works of the flesh and instead, be filled with the fruit of the Spirit. Our lives will take on new joy and peace as we continue to discover and fulfill our purpose, knowing God personally, knowing whose we are, and knowing that we are loved. Take time tonight to seek Him and His guidance for your life.

## **Monday, May 7, 2018**

### **Read Psalm 16.**

The psalmist shouts, *“In Your Presence is Fullness of Joy.”* The psalmist understands several things that bring him joy, even in the midst of pain and the circumstances of life surrounding him. The psalmist rests in the fact that he is not alone, that God is at our right hand, that a great inheritance awaits him. Joy and Peace, two of the fruits of the Spirit, are available to us regardless of our outside circumstances. Our joy and peace come from, not what is going on around us, but from what God has done for us. *“In Your Presence is Fullness of Joy.”* In His presence, we remember that we are never alone, we are reminded of the great inheritance that awaits us, we understand that we are children of the living God, we recognize the great sacrifice and love Jesus Christ showed us on the cross. Such love, unconditional love, brings us joy. Knowing we are not alone brings us peace.

Ken Houts, in his book, Maximize Your Influence, writes, *“Every time the devil comes before God to accuse you of sin, the Father looks at you. However, He does not see the sin; the only thing He sees is the blood of Jesus. So the devil says, ‘God, do You see what he/she has done?’ And the Father says, ‘I don’t know what you are talking about Mr. devil. I don’t see anything but the blood of My Son.’”*

So what does the devil do? The devil descends and sits upon your shoulder, and begins to remind you of your sin, your mistakes, and your failures. Houts writes, *“He [the devil] continues to beat you over the head with the rubber hose of condemnation until you believe more in the power of your sin than the power of the blood of Jesus Christ. After a while, you take that rubber hose of condemnation out of the devil’s hand*

*and begin to beat yourself over the head when you say, 'You know what, Mr. devil? You are right. I am horrible. I don't deserve God's best.'"*

*"While you are beating yourself up for your sin, beating yourself up for failing, for the mistakes you have made, saying the same thing the devil has been saying to you, God declares from Heaven, 'You are not guilty. You are not guilty.'"*

Why are you not guilty? Jesus took your sin and your failure and your mistake and your bad decisions upon the cross. He took your sin, your trouble, your torment so you can have His righteousness and His good and His peace.

That is where our joy and peace come from...it comes from knowing that we are loved, we are forgiven, and we are blessed. How do we conquer the tormenting thoughts about our past sins and past mistakes...How do we conquer those thoughts that would come into our lives to steal our joy? We conquer the devil...we conquer our past sins...we conquer those thoughts that would steal our joy...by focusing and speaking aloud what the "*blood of Jesus*" has done for us.

We testify that through the blood of Jesus we have been redeemed out of the hand of the devil (Ephesians 1:7); our sins are forgiven (I John 1:9); we are continually cleansed from sin (I John 1:7); we have been made righteous, just as if we had never sinned (Romans 5:9); we are set apart for God (Hebrews 13:12); and because of Jesus we can enter into the presence of God with boldness (Hebrews 10: 19).

Keep what Jesus has done for you in the forefront of all you do. Stay connected to the vine daily. Experience the joy and peace of knowing that Christ died for you and is preparing a home for you in eternity. Experience the joy and peace of

knowing that Christ walks with you and His Spirit empowers you to fulfill the purpose for which you were created. Experience the joy and peace of knowing you are loved by the Creator of the Universe... You are an Easter People.

## **Tuesday, May 8, 2018**

### **Read Isaiah 61.**

During the time of Isaiah, the nation of Israel was falling apart. The kingdom had split and both Israel and Judah were experiencing moral and spiritual decline, pagan worship, the poor were being oppressed, women neglected their families for carnal pleasure, many of the priest were drunks and people-pleasers. All around Isaiah, things were falling apart & God was clearly angry at His people. Yet, Isaiah didn't just preach a message of repentance and turning from their evil ways. Isaiah also preached a message of joy and peace.

In Isaiah 61, he says, *“I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, My soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness...”* Isaiah could rejoice even when his people, his country, was falling apart around him because, like Jesus, Paul, and so many others, he knew whose he was and who was in control. Isaiah also focused not on his surroundings for how he should feel, but on his salvation. Why be joyful in our God? We are joyful because of forgiveness, eternal life, mercy, righteousness, and salvation.

Take time tonight to simply sit with God and think about the many blessings He has given you; the fact that you are forgiven, loved, and have eternal life if you simply believe, invite Christ into your heart. To be Easter People... What a gift? What a joy?

## **Wednesday, May 9, 2018**

### **Read Jeremiah 31: 1-14.**

Jeremiah is a prophet during the time that Judah is being threatened by Assyria and Egypt and besieged by Babylon, and many of its inhabitants have been forced into exile. Jeremiah speaks for God and God says, “*I will turn their mourning into joy.*”

God says, “*I will turn their mourning into joy.*” So often we try to turn our mourning into joy; we try to take control. If I do this, I will be happy. If I build a bigger home, buy a newer car, go on the next vacation, go hunting, or shopping, I will be happy...I’ll turn my mourning into joy. Yet, none of this works for we cannot fill our hearts with joy and peace; only God can. God turns our mourning into joy, not us.

Many times we connect our joy, our happiness, with our outside circumstances. It could be our possessions, our relationships, our jobs. Unfortunately, when our possession gets old, our relationship breaks up, our job falls apart, and our joy goes with it.

Our joy and peace cannot be connected to things of the world for things of the world disappear, but God’s love does not change. It is God, and only God, that can turn our mourning into joy regardless of our circumstances. Trust Him. Talk to Him tonight.

## **Thursday, May 10, 2018**

### **Read Philippians 4:6-7.**

Paul writes, “*The peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard our hearts.*” Prayer is a time to transfer the burden of one’s soul into God’s hands. It is there that we find peace. God takes our burden and guards our heart

with His love. We simply need to talk to Him and share with Him all that we are dealing with, all our hurts and needs. Then we simply need to trust.

Take time tonight to sit with Him...share everything...and trust that He will take care of you.

### **Friday, May 11, 2018**

#### **Read Ephesians 2.**

Paul writes how Christ has made us alive, raised us up together, saved us by His grace, we are His workmanship, we have been brought near to God by the blood of Christ, He is our peace, the wall of separation between us and God has been torn down, we are no longer strangers and foreigners but instead are now children of God, and Christ is our cornerstone.

Wow! The peace the world offers is temporary and short-lived, while the peace and joy God offers is eternal and exists regardless of our circumstances because God's love doesn't change. We are His children. As one bumper sticker says, "*Know God, Know Peace...No God, No Peace.*"

Invite Him In...Talk To Him...Know Peace.

### **Saturday, May 12, 2018**

Read and reflect on the following scriptures from the Revised Common Lectionary for the coming week, the 7th Sunday of Easter. The scriptures for this coming week, May 13th are:

\*Acts 1:15-17, 21-26

\*Psalm 1

\*I John 5:9-13

\*John 17:6-19

Take time in prayer. Celebrate. We are an Easter people...a Resurrection people. Believe. Remember. Christ is Risen!  
Christ is Risen Indeed! **Remember to invite someone to church tomorrow!**

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(See John 19:17-37)

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"I, JESUS, HEREBY BEQUEATH MY CARPENTRY STUFF TO ZED, MY GOOD TUNIC TO ROB, AND I'LL BE BACK TO PICK UP THE REST. TO EVERYONE IN THE UNIVERSE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE ... I LEAVE LIFE."