Daily Devotions to Help You "Witness for Jesus" as You Live the Lifestyle of a Faithful Steward

Monday

Becoming Workers in the Harvest

Scripture Reading:
"Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When He saw the crowds, He had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field' " (Matthew 9:35-38).

Jesus knows that people need a shepherd. Jesus said to His disciples, as He speaks to us, *"Ask the Lord of the harvest . . . to send out workers into His harvest field."* It is God's will that all people come to salvation (2 Peter 3:9). The harvest field belongs to the Lord, and God will see that the people needed for the harvest will be available.

God invites all of us to be His workers in the harvest field. He gives us the privilege of using our time and our talents as He involves us in this important work. Through Christ, we can do work that will be blessed into eternity. We begin this all-important work by praying for a successful harvest with many workers being sent into the harvest field. God's harvest field is always ripe with people needing to hear of Jesus' love.

As we pray for God's work to be accomplished through workers in the field, we are, in essence, allowing Him to make us the answers to our own prayers. God will find ways to use our gifts in ways that will touch others. We are encouraged to pray for God's work to be done, and to be involved in doing this work personally. God will give us the strength to overcome the excuses that often plague us such as "I don't have the time" or "I'm not equipped." As Paul wrote, *"I can do everything through Him Who gives me strength"* (Philippians 4:13).

Prayer: Lord, thank you for your love, grace, and mercy. There are many dying people who need to hear the Good News. Help me to be an instrument through which You can work. I give You all the praise and glory. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Tuesday

Let Your Light Shine

Scripture Readings:
Jesus said, *"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life"* (John 8:12).

Jesus said, *"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven"* (Matthew 5:14-16).

We are dull, dead sinful creatures with no light of our own. The world itself was dark and empty, we read in Genesis 1:2, until God spoke those words, *"'Let there be light,' and there was light"* (Genesis 1:3). What the Creator God did for the earth, the Redeemer God does for us humans. John, the apostle,

tells us how this has come about: *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world"* (John 1:1, 14, 9).

We are to keep that light within us burning brightly and shining for the entire world to see. Jesus said, *"You are the light of the world . . . let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven"* (Matthew 5:14-16). This we can accomplish on our own no more than we could put our own lights within us. God is light. As Jesus' followers, we reflect the light that comes from Him. Receiving God's light, our light is intended to give light to others. Our Sanctifier God nourishes us through Word and Sacrament and equips us to be that "light on the hill." He is the one Who enables us to obey Paul's command: *"For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light"* (Ephesians 5:8). Those who live in God's light produce good fruit by which God is glorified.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, You are the only true light in a darkened world. May Your light that shines within me be a light to others. I pray for steadfast faith that will always seek to do Your will and fulfill Your purposes for my life. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Wednesday

Why Witness?

Scripture Reading:
"I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ" (Philemon 6).

Paul, a prisoner, writes an appeal to Philemon, one who has, for reasons not spelled out to us, kept Onesimus as a slave. Yet Paul refers to him as *"our dear friend and fellow worker"* (verse 1). Thus we know that Philemon is a believer. Paul informs Philemon that he gives thanks because of Philemon's faith in Jesus and his love for other believers.

Then he offers the exhortation we read above: *"I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith."* Surely we understand Paul's hope. As stewards of the Gospel, we are to be busy at fulfilling the Great Commission to go to all nations, baptizing and teaching (Matthew 28:19-20). We know that God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should be saved (1 Timothy 2:4). We know that we have the "beautiful feet" that bring the Good News of Jesus Christ (Romans 10:15).

In writing to Philemon, though, Paul states another reason for witnessing: *"so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ."* This understanding that flows from witnessing about our faith benefits both the one witnessing and the one hearing the Good News. Certainly when one hears and believes the Word of God and is brought from death to life, he begins to understand all the good things he has in Christ. The speaker also profits, for, as he shares God's Word, his own understanding and knowledge are increased as his faith is strengthened through obedience to God's command.

Let us pray that we might *"be active in sharing [our] faith"* for the saving of souls as well as our own edification.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for the trust You place in me to be a witness and an ambassador for You. Use me as a witness to those who need to hear of Your amazing love and unsurpassable mercy. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Thursday

The Power of the Word

Scripture Reading:
"But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed" (2 Corinthians 4:7-9).

The Word of God has been described in many ways, but each description carries the connotation of worth and value and power. The Word, we read in Hebrews 4:12, is *"living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword . . . "* The prophet Isaiah declared that the Word that goes out of our Lord's mouth *"will accomplish what [He] desire[s] and achieve the purpose for which [He] sent it"* (Isaiah 55:11). By the word of His mouth, God created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1, 3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26). God Himself called His word a fire and a hammer (Jeremiah 23:29). In Ephesians, Paul wrote about the Armor of God, topping off all the defensive weapons God gives us with one offensive weapon, *"the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God"* (Ephesians 6:17).

In our reading, we find Paul describing the Word as a *"treasure in jars of clay."* This great treasure is God's Word. It lives inside us; it strengthens us; it encourages us; it gives us hope; it never fades away; it enables us to persevere. Indeed this is a treasure!

Many don't know that this treasure exists. They may have it beautifully leather-bound and on a shelf in their homes, but they don't realize they have a priceless treasure in their possession. It is up to us who have this treasure to share it, for it can never be used up, never decrease in value, and never lose its newness and vitality.

Prayer: Lord, thank You for Your Word through which You speak to me and all people. Through Your Word and the working of the Holy Spirit, my faith is strengthened for which I thank You. Help me to spend time each day reading and meditating on it. Through Christ I pray. Amen.

Friday

Sharing the Good News

Scripture Reading:
"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

God's plan for His people has always been for us to take responsibility for sharing the Good News. When He called Moses to lead the Hebrews out of slavery, He told Moses to tell the people, *"I am the Lord . . . I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm . . . I will take you . . . and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God . . ."* (Exodus 6:6-7). When the Philistines terrorized the Israelites by sending Goliath out before them every morning and evening for forty days, God sent David, a young shepherd boy, to answer the giant's taunts. How did David respond to Goliath's threat to *"give [his] flesh to the birds . . . and the beasts . . ."*? Defiantly he said, *". . . I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will hand you over to me . . . and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel"* (1 Samuel 17:44-46).

What we want people today to know is the same message: there is a God Who cares for us and is almighty and powerful, yet loving and compassionate. This is the God Who, while we were still sinners, sent us a Savior to

redeem us from our slavery to sin (Romans 5:8). This is the God, Who, at just the right time, *"sent His Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons"* (Galatians 4:4-5).

Through Christ, we know the Father. Through Christ, we can come to the Father. Through Christ, we have life everlasting in Heaven. This is the Good News that we as stewards of the Gospel will want to share. May God give us courage to use the opportunities He gives us.

Prayer: Lord, forgive me when I've been timid and have wasted opportunities to share the Gospel with others. Grant me courage and boldness and give me the words I need to tell others how much You love them. Thank You for Your love and patience. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Saturday

The Fields Are Ripe

Scripture Reading:
I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest" (John 4:35).

Easter is the most joyous, the most victorious celebration of the church year. It is an opportune time for us as stewards to *"declare His glory among the nations, His marvelous deeds among all peoples"* (Psalm 96:3)! What deed can be more marvelous than the resurrection of our Lord from the dead? Yes, *"Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep"* (1 Corinthians 15:20), and we, too, shall be raised from the dead to live with Him forever in Heaven.

As stewards of the Gospel, we have this good news to tell. Jesus reminded us of the urgency of the proclamation of His redemption. We read in John 4:35 that Jesus said, *"Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest."* There is a need for us to tell this message effectively, passionately, clearly, and with perseverance so that all may be led by God's grace to respond to Christ's gift of salvation.

Along with pronouncing this good news with our own lips, we have a responsibility to give. We respond to the needs of others by taking groceries to our food banks, by contributing funds to be used for helping families with various financial difficulties, by sending money to areas hit by natural disasters, such as floods and hurricanes. What greater need is there than to provide financial support for those who minister to the greatest need of all—the spiritual needs of Jesus' lost sheep? Our giving should be done willingly, cheerfully, generously, even as God in Christ has given to us.

Jesus promised that, as we carry out His commission to *". . . make disciples of all nations . . .,"* He will be with us *". . . to the very end of the age"* (Matthew 28:19, 20). Paul reminded us that *"God is able to make all grace abound to [us], so that in all things at all times, having all that [we] need, [we] will abound in every good work"* (2 Corinthians 9:8). Every day, the Holy Spirit provides opportunities for us as stewards to tell the good news and to give according to our abilities that the message of God's love in Christ may be spread throughout the world.

Prayer: Lord, open my heart and eyes for opportunities to share the Gospel. Help me to be a witness by what I say and do. May all that I do give You praise and glory. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.