

WEEKLY DEVOTION – Tuesday, December 3, 2024
Pastor Bruce Kischnick, Grace Lutheran Church, New Albany, IN

“Someone Was in My Heart!”

READING: Psalm 16:1-3 – Keep me safe, O God, for in you I take refuge. I said to the Lord, “You are my Lord; apart from you I have no good thing .” As for the saints who are in the land, they are the glorious ones in whom is all my delight.

Back in October I underwent a heart catheterization. They prepped me and shaved me and made me wait for what seemed like most of the time. Then they took me to an O.R. and prepped me some more. Finally they gave me some “happy juice” and things got hazy. But I do remember at one point watching the big monitor that hung over me. There I could see the chambers of my heart, the valves opening and closing, and the catheter moving around INSIDE MY HEART! Even though I was a bit loopy I remember thinking how strange and weird it was to see in real time someone inside my heart moving around and exploring it.

During the week of November 11-17, four ladies of our congregation were called to their eternal rest. Jeanne Romer died on Tuesday, very suddenly and unexpectedly. I have known her husband Jeff for 32 years, but only started to get to know Jeanne since they joined our congregation in 2020. I liked her very much, and it broke my heart to hear the pain in Jeff’s voice when he called to tell me about her. She was in my heart, one of the saints “in whom is all my delight.”

On Friday morning I awoke to find a text message from Lee Lynn, the daughter of Sharon Mater. She let me know that Sharon had passed away about 3:30 that morning. I have known Sharon for nearly thirty years. I had lunch with her husband Bruce week after week when our prayer group met. I have visited Sharon scores of times over these past years as she had become house-bound. She was a woman of deep faith and great wisdom. She was in my heart, one of the saints “in whom is all my delight.”

That same Friday I made sure to visit Peggy and Kenny Morris. Peggy had been declining for the last several weeks, and I wanted to be sure to visit her before the weekend kept me busy. When I came into the house, I found Kenny, her daughter Sandra and her husband Tony, and Peggy’s son Bobby all standing watch. One glance at them and then one at Peggy told me her time was rapidly drawing close, and she died that afternoon. Peggy was always such a character, ready to joke with me and cut-up – just a lively and wonderful Christian of strong and abiding faith. She was in my heart, one of the saints “in whom is all my delight.”

That same Friday I made an afternoon visit to Susie and Keith Bolin. Susie, too, had been in a rapid decline, beset by a number of ailments. Keith and I talked quietly while she slept, then prayed that the Lord would not delay much longer but would bring an end to her suffering. Sunday after church I was walking up their driveway when I received Keith’s text that Susie had gone on home. Susie and Keith were nearly always in church, usually in the same pew, Sunday or Saturday, week after week. I had ministered to Susie’s father. I had shared communion with her and Keith in their home. Susie knew and loved her Lord. She was in my heart, one of the saints “in whom is all my delight.”

What a week! I’ve never had one in all my years at Grace to match it. Don’t want another one like it either. Having been at Grace for all these years, none of our members are “just parishioners”. You are my family, my brothers and sisters, and I love you. When the Lord calls one of you home, I not only minister to the family and survivors, but I also have to allow myself to grieve. You’re all in my heart.

I have always loved Psalm 16. I call it "The Pastor's Psalm" for in it you can find most of the most important truths and doctrines of the Christian faith. In particular v.3 has been one of my favorite verses. When it says "As for the saints who are in the land..." I think of those I have served and still serve at Grace Lutheran, those living and those now in heaven. They have all been in my heart, and it has been my heart's delight to know them, teach them, minister to them, laugh and cry with them, and to love them.

People asked me that week and the one to follow: "Pastor, how do you handle all these deaths and funerals?" My answer has always been the same one: "I have a promise, and I will hold the Lord to it. I will see these folks again." The Resurrection of Jesus is my staff to lean on in sorrow and my rod with which to bash the devil when he wants to make me despair. See, not only have all of you been in my heart, but better yet all of you are in Jesus' heart! Thanks be to Christ Jesus! Amen.

PRAYER:

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- 1) **THANKSGIVING SERVICE** – 7:00 PM tomorrow, Wednesday, November 27. My last Thanksgiving sermon at Grace (probably). "O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, and his mercy endures forever!"
- 2) **ADVENT SERVICES:** There will be three mid-week Advent services on Wednesdays, December 4, 11, and 18 at 7:00. A reminder to those affected, Grace on Wednesday will move up supper to 5:15, and classes from 5:45-6:45. Church then follows. Our theme this year is: "Signs of Messiah: Isaiah Speaks". We will look at Isaiah's prophecy in Isaiah 7, 9, and 11: "A Virgin", "A Son", and "A Branch". Plan now to join us as we prepare to celebrate our Savior's birth.
- 3) **GIFTS for KIDS:** we will again be gifting needy families within and outside our congregation with clothes, toys, and other things for Christmas. We can only do this with the money you provide for us. You can mail it to the office or drop it in the offering in an envelope that simply says, "Gifts for Kids". Thank you on behalf of every child we make smile on Christmas morning.