

**WEEKLY DEVOTION – Tuesday, April 20, 2021**  
**Pastor Bruce Kischnick, Grace Lutheran Church, New Albany, IN**

**“LIKE ANGEL-WING BEGONIAS”**

**READING: Psalm 84:1-5 – How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord Almighty! My soul yearns, even faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. Even the sparrow has found a home and the swallow a nest for herself where she may have her young – a place near your altar, O Lord Almighty, my King and my God. Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you. Blessed are those whose strength is in you, who have set their hearts on pilgrimage.**

Some six or seven years ago I brought communion to the apartment of Juanita Lane, now sainted. As we visited, I noticed a beautiful, sturdy, deep maroon, three feet tall plant on her patio. I commented on it, and she told me it was an angel-wing begonia. Then she said that it would soon be killed by the first frost. I asked why she didn't bring it inside her home. She said, "Look around here. I don't have any place to put it." Then she said that it was all right because she already had taken cuttings off of it, and in the spring, she would have two new begonias from the original. She said she had done this for years.

I was intrigued and asked her if I could take a couple of cuttings from the plant and would she show me how it was done. She was happy to do so, and I have been propagating begonias ever since. I remember her telling me, "They really only need two things: plenty of water and plenty of sunshine." Last summer I had six beautiful begonias on my deck all summer long, and they blossomed and grew with abandon. As the danger of frost came last fall, I took cuttings from the sturdiest specimens to start the whole process over. But the prettiest one of them all I decided to bring into the house whole. I wanted to see what it would do if I just let it keep growing. Well, that begonia grew to a little over eight feet tall. It put out three additional shoots that are each over three feet long now, and it merrily bloomed off and on, all winter long. Last Monday I took a cutting off of the top, and next week it and my other five will be moved out on the deck to bathe in the sunshine and pretty up the place all summer long.

In our text the Psalmist speaks about his joy and contentment in being in the Lord's house. He says that even the sparrows and the swallows love it there. (Sort of glad we have windows in our house of worship! The birds would have left messes there, I'm sure!) He says that in the Lord's house he finds blessing and strength. His whole being, soul and body, yearns for his courts and finds joy there.

I know just what he means. What a joy it was to have lots of people in church for Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter morning! We had 187 in the late service this year. Last year we had 17 of us! What a difference it makes to have many voices raised in praise and prayer. I think many have longed and yearned to be in the Lord's house during the COVID crisis. How good it is to be able more and more to welcome back those who have been

isolated by the pandemic. You see, like those angel-wing begonias, the Lord knows we need two things, and plenty of them: God's word and his sacraments. He gave those gifts to us because our souls cannot thrive without them. They give us hope and courage and meaning and direction. They bring us comfort and strength and assurance. And both of those gifts are best received in the Lord's house surrounded by the Lord's people and the ministry of his called servants. And when we are well supplied with his Word and his Sacraments then we can also bear rich and abundant fruit. We serve him better when we are fortified by the things we need most spiritually.

My begonias produce large clumps of pretty little blossoms that remind people of angel wings, thus their name. They only produce those lovely blossoms when they get enough of what they need: water and sunshine. The same is true for us as God's people. We produce good fruits and love one another best when we are supplied with the spiritual things we need most: his Word and his Sacraments. So let us rejoice that as more and more of us are vaccinated and the fear of COVID recedes we can look forward to worshipping our Lord together again, thanking and praising him for all his blessings. And we can be nurtured and equipped by his Word and Sacraments often and with effect. Amen.

**PRAYER:**

**ANNOUNCEMENT(S):**

1) **CONFIRMATION REQUEST:** Our Junior Confirmands are well into their preparations for Confessional Sunday and Confirmation Day, May 16 and 23 respectively. They have been working on their Personal Statements and are now working on their third and final drafts. On April 30 and May 1 they'll participate in their Confirmands Retreat. So, I would ask you to remember them in your prayers. Ask the Lord to pour his Holy Spirit upon them to clarify all they've been taught and to bring to mind the knowledge that they'll need in a few weeks. More than that, ask the Lord to hold them steadfast and sure through the coming years so that their gifts of baptism and their desire for communion will not desert them.