

WELCOME TO THE BALTIC!

The Beauty of Copenhagen

The little time we have here will launch us into the loveliness of the Baltic beyond...



In search of different land, more plentiful resources, longer growing seasons, and the spoils of war, an ancient Germanic people of the far north began to terrorize lands as far away as Russia, the British Isles, France and Sicily. They became

known as Vikings. And they would change the lands they invaded – for better and for ill. Their ancestors now live as some of the most peaceful and organized citizens in the world. And they reside in Denmark and Sweden (and Norway).

SEPTEMBER 3 & 4, 2014

Upcoming



Departure for the open sea, the coast of Denmark and Northern Germany passing in the night and the train for Berlin tomorrow.



Tallinn, Estonia and the beautiful blend of Germanic, Swedish, Finnish and Russian cultures with an Estonian flair ...

And Then ...



Look forward to amazing St. Petersburg, formerly Leningrad, now renewed, polished, crazy and terribly exciting ...

PRAYER #1 FOR THE DAY

Dear Lord, today we are full of excitement as we begin our trip to the Baltic area. We ask for safety as we travel, a renewed appreciation for your creation, and a grateful heart for the opportunity to travel. Throughout our trip help us to remember that we are guests in the countries we will visit. In Christ's name, Amen.

- Dorothy Welling

IT IS OUR LIVES AND NOT FROM OUR WORDS THAT OUR RELIGION WILL BE JUDGED.

- Thomas Jefferson

Today's Devotion: Love Overflowing – with Understanding

It is significant in our scripture on the right, that the love hoped for should be overflowing with *knowledge* and *full insight*. This biblical blessing is a great way to begin our journey. For traveling to new places is the perfect forum for new knowledge. Today, as we move through Copenhagen and out to sea, imagine yourself growing in wisdom, gaining new insights, adding to your knowledge, expanding

your understanding, broadening your perspective. Be bold in learning new things about life in these new places. And consider the relevance of how that affects your faith. For today's passage, it is knowledge and insight that serve as the bedrock of love. And it is this kind of love that also makes friendships better, travel easier, conflicts less troublesome, relationships richer and life in general more enjoyable.



And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you to determine what is best...

(Philippians 1:9-10)

Prayer #2 for the Day



Dear Lord, who is overall, in and through all, we give you thanks and ask for safe traveling mercies, as we go to different lands and meet new people. May we do so as your ambassadors and praise your Holy Name. May your will be done. Amen.

- Vivian Philson

"When you know better, you do better."

—Maya Angelou

What I Saw and Learned Today:

A GIFT TO THE WORLD

Lifted by grace

Sustained by love

Emboldened by faith

Enriched by joy

Embraced by eternity

In the arms of God

And offered to the world

As a gift -

You!

Providence Rules:

1. **Kindness is Contagious**
2. **Flexibility is Essential**
3. **Happiness is a Choice**
4. **Gratitude is Transformative**

MY PERSPECTIVE

The more I learn,
the more I understand.

The more I understand,
the more I appreciate.

The more I appreciate,
the more I enjoy!

– David Jordan





Welcome to Germany

Now united, once divided...



September 5th

The port, Warnemunde, Germany

And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you to determine what is best so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, having produced a harvest of righteousness... (Philippians 1:9-11).

I love the image “a harvest of righteousness.” To begin with, know that righteousness is simply a fancy word for making *right choices* and *living wisely*. Now imagine your life as a rolling meadow widely spread with colorful wildflowers. As we travel by train to Berlin, we will likely be seeing this very image spreading before us. Notice the beauty of the German countryside. Even as we leave and then return to Warnemunde, the same exercise ought to work. There will be flowers and window boxes overflowing with exquisite blossoms and creative arrangements. Notice how the sky, sea and surroundings meld together in harmony. Allow these views to remind you of our scripture verse from above. It is the Bible’s expectation, it is God’s hope, that our lives will offer a similar kind of beauty – a harvest that in some way or another, will be of benefit to God’s broader creation.

So then for all of us today, live with dignity, honor, kindness, humility, courage, wisdom, and love—a *full* harvest of righteousness. Love, David

Wisdom is better than weapons of war...
—Ecclesiastes 9:18



Berlin!

Remember 25 Years ago
and events of 1989 ...

The Brandenburg Gate, former dividing line of the Cold War.

It was only twenty-five years ago that the “Iron Curtain” disintegrated. 1989. And as many historians still say, it was “a year that changed the world”. This is truly an amazing thing. And we sometimes forget how dramatic the transformation to our situation was and still is. I remember well the deep divisions between east and west, NATO and the WARSAW PACT, a Command Economy and a Free Market, Communism and Democracy. But today, we will see a new world. We will disembark into what once had been East Germany, an area behind the Iron Curtain and mostly off-limits for the average westerner. And today, we will witness a former East Germany transformed. Now it is simply northern Germany. Here, we will see a land that has changed more rapidly and mostly, more gracefully than probably anywhere else on earth over the last twenty-five years. And, for the former East German people, the changes have been dramatic, and in many cases they have been troubling and widely traumatic. Without warning or preparation, regular folks were thrust into an entirely new reality of economic policies, competition, job insecurity and technological advances that overwhelmed them. There was among many an inability to adjust to the order, or disorder.

There were few new jobs for the “Easties”. They felt vastly out of place, like second or even third-class citizens, the nuances of the East German dialect giving them away as less than desirable employees. Consequently, there have been widespread and well-documented cases of depression, family tensions, generational divisions, and wide gaps between the West Germans in control of the unification of Germany, and the East Germans largely at the mercy of the new reality that became their lives.

Few former East Germans would wish to return to the old system of repressions, spies, secret police, widespread deprivation, poor quality goods, insufficient manufacturing, horrible environmental problems, corrupt leaders, and the dictatorship of Erik Honniker.

Yet, as we visit, we will do well to remember this newly changed political, economic and emotional landscape. The towns and cities we will see and the people we encounter have experienced more change in their lives than we can possibly imagine. Now the economy is thriving and the people have finally adjusted. But may our visit here be a sober and sacred reminder of what once was, what has been endured and what else we have to be thankful for.

Prayer for Berlin and Warnemunde (Continued)

Today's Prayer

Our Heavenly Father, be with each of us today as we journey together from Warnemunde to Berlin. We thank you for the opportunity to have this wonderful learning experience. Make us ever mindful of what the German people have had to endure in the past century and how very fortunate we are to live in a country with so many freedoms. In his name we pray, Amen.

- Mary Ann Ritchie



What I Saw and Learned Today:



September 6th, Day Three

Sailing at Sea

Your steadfast love, O Lord, extends to the heavens, your faithfulness to the clouds (Psalm 36:5).

Sunsets are remarkable things – especially on or over the sea. The waning sun dropping from the sky, reflecting on the water, casting beams of light through, under, and around cumulous clouds, rays extending up and over, colors profuse—orange and golden—glowing against a backdrop of purple and azure, all highlighting the remaining fluffy white of the clouds. The dark is coming but not until the sun offers a final, simple, silent, glorious farewell over the water and into the sky.

Surely, it was the vibrant light of an early evening sunset that inspired Psalm 36:5. And as we move along this journey together, let us take advantage of our time and the many remarkable scenes that we will share. Look for God’s creative hand in the people and places we encounter. Whether at our next stop in Tallinn, or St. Petersburg or Helsinki or Stockholm or the vast sea and space in between, remain inquisitive about the history, curious about the customs, interested in the art, astounded at the architecture, and in awe at how it all fits together in God’s tapestry that is creation.

God’s love and faithfulness is a part of everything—a sunset, the sea, a flower, the creative genius that inspired the artistic wonders we are seeing, you, me ... As you increasingly recognize the reality of God’s goodness and wondrous handiwork, allow yourself the luxury of silent awe. Stand in wonder. Give thanks. And be prepared to grow with each new view today in sacred gratitude.

Devotional Reminder

I am with you, will watch over you wherever you go and I will bring you safely back to this land (Genesis 28:15).

We have begun a wonderful vacation floating on a luxurious ship at sea. God provides us with many forms of respite as we enjoy our time away from everyday life. God is with us wherever we are and will protect us along the way and return us safely home.

- Janine Lafferty

Psalm 139:7-18

*Where can I go from your spirit?
Or where can I go from your presence?
If I ascend to heaven, you are there;
if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.
If I take to the wings of the morning,
and settle at the farthest limits of the sea
Even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me fast.
If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light around me become night."
Even the darkness is not dark to you;
the night is as bright as the day,
For darkness is as light to you.*



Things I Saw and Learned:

1

2

3



Tallinn, Estonia!

A Baltic Old City on a Hill...



Stepping back in Baltic time ...

Notice the cobblestones, the towers, the sea, the varied architecture...

There is rich history here. Beyond the native Estonian culture and its distinctive language (one of the few in the world related to Finnish and Hungarian) Danish, Swedish, Teutonic/German and especially Russian influences run deep. Like we have and will learn about St. Petersburg, Tallinn was rocked by significant changes and negative forces before, during and after World War II. The Nazis created all sorts of chaos during their brutal occupation, followed immediately by Soviet occupation and forced integration into the Soviet Union of Socialist Republics (USSR). With a large influx of Russian speakers during

the forty-five years from 1945 to 1990 Estonia was threatened with losing its sense of self, of language, culture and history. Russian/Soviet influences were huge during those years since one of Moscow's goals was to create a more homogenous union based on Russian language and culture along with communist ideology and all that entailed. What we will experience during our brief time in Tallinn is the remarkable revival of native Estonian culture, the resurgence of the complex, intellectually rigorous Estonian language and deep pride in the beauty and historic, multicultural influences that have shaped this amazing land.



Today's Prayer

An Exploration of Love ...

*Love is patient; love is kind.
Love is not envious, or
boastful or arrogant or rude.
Love does not insist on its
own way; it is not irritable or
resentful; it does not rejoice
in wrongdoing but rejoices in
the truth ... Love never ends
(I Corinthians 13:4-8).*

Only two words describe what love is in this passage: “Love is patient; love is kind” (I Corinthians 13:4). But three full verses tell us what love is not. Perhaps the situation in the Corinthian church was the cause. As with many other churches, and with any gathering of people anywhere, there will always be problems. Then, like now, there were folks insisting on their own way; they were irritable with those they didn’t particularly like, resentful of those who appeared to get preferential treatment, glad when things went wrong or feelings got hurt...

As Christians, especially in a faith community like a church, these kinds of attitudes are out of bounds. They violate God’s hopes for us. But it takes great maturity to remain loving in the face of tension and conflict. If we feel threatened in a fellowship, the first thing that begins to suffer is trust. The second is love.

Today, make every effort to fit the description of a loving person. And do your best to let your love be genuine. “Faking it” will soon get wearisome for you and those around you. But genuine love is contagious. Trust will grow. And love will flourish. Imagine it to be and then do your best spending the rest of our trip to make it happen.

Love, David

*One touch of nature makes the
whole world kin* — William Shakespeare



While in Old Town Tallinn ...

Look for differences in architectural styles; listen carefully; love fully...

Prayer for the Day:

Lord, you have provided a wonderful opportunity for us to see and learn about another part of our beautiful world. Help us to see You and your creations as we travel. Bless our time together with so many friends, new and old, as we grow in knowledge and appreciation of the places we visit. Keep us strong and healthy as we travel. We praise you this day for your power, your love, and the awesome world you allow us to enjoy. We are truly blessed with this opportunity. To God be the glory! Amen

- Carol DeLaddy

Providence Rules:

1. **Kindness is Contagious**
2. **Flexibility is Essential**
3. **Happiness is a Choice**
4. **Gratitude is Transformative**

What I Saw and Learned Today:



St. Petersburg, Russia



The Dream

Bigger than life, physically and emotionally, Peter the Great dreamed of a city that Russians could be proud of.

The Horrors

From the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 to the German siege in WWII, St. Petersburg has endured tragedy and triumph.

Today

Renovated and renewed to its former glory, St. Petersburg stands among the world's greatest cities.

Peter the Great built a city to impress the world. He succeeded beyond his wildest imagination.



It all began in the mind of one man. Peter the Great, this physical mountain of a human being, experienced his Russian land as a place of great potential, but still backwards. It was lacking the culture, the wealth, the education, and the glories of what he saw in the west. France, England, Germany, Sweden, Denmark ... all that he saw in those more sophisticated and advanced

cultures prodded him to action in Russia. Whether his people wanted it or not, whether they were ready or not, Peter the Great was going to drag the land he led and the people he loved into the new world of art, culture and international respect. And his dream of a city, a port on the Gulf of Finland that would open Russia to the world and a place that would showcase the beauty and

ingenuity of Russia, St. Petersburg has more than fulfilled his dream. So beginning in 1703, thousands of workman began dredging swamps, cutting trees, forming canals, shoring up islands, building bridges, driving large tree pilings deep into the mud to serve as supports for the islands that would be the settings for some of the most beautiful buildings in the world.



St. Petersburg at night – a sight we may not see, but just imagine if we could ...

A city this rich in history and so filled with beauty calls out to be compared to Venice with its grand buildings and vast network of canals. But many now say the glories of Peter the Great's vision that has become this remarkable place exceeds even Venice.

900 days – that was the length of the siege the Germans perpetrated on the city during World War II. Then known as Leningrad, this incredible city endured unimaginable conditions at the hands of a German war machine bent upon the ultimate control of Russia itself. The entire western part of the former Soviet Union had been invaded by Hitler under his Operation Barbarossa in June of 1941. St. Petersburg (Leningrad in those days) remained one of the few population centers able to stem the tide of the German's relentless push. Most expected the city to capitulate. But brave and resilient, and in spite of hundreds of thousands of deaths, relentless bombing, lengthy famine and brutal cold all of over 900

days, St. Petersburg survived. The subsequent years saw deprivations of a different kind. The Soviet Union reasserted its authority over all aspects of civilian life. Corrupt leaders on both local and national levels evoked resentment and new kinds of survival strategies. From struggling for food and the very essence of staying alive during the siege of WWII, the new difficulties under communism involved repressions of personal freedoms, shortages of certain food items, and quality goods. Plus, there came to be considerable restrictions on religious expression. Faith became largely frowned upon in official circles. But we now know that while faith might be frowned upon, it is not and will not be denied. Quietly, believers

continued to study, pray, attend services, and maintain devotional stances in life despite the potential consequences. As we shall see, St. Petersburg today is filled with a plethora of glorious churches, some still being restored to their former glory. Sadly, part of the religious persecution under communism resulted in part from the corruption and repressions that the church itself had perpetuated at various points. Let's hope lessons have been learned – by them and us!





O Lord, my God, creator of heaven and earth – thank you for your countless blessings. Thank you for safe and peaceful travels. We look forward to meeting and visiting with the people of St. Petersburg, and we pray for your peace and goodwill in their lives. Amen.

- Mable Christian

If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing (I Corinthians 13:3).

The Teacher of Ecclesiastes drove himself—at least in the parable he constructs in Ecclesiastes 2:4-15. Great dreams and hard work resulted in remarkable success. We can imagine long hours, tireless struggles, gathered savings, clever deals, big risks, and, finally, the remarkable power and incredible wealth he describes in those passages in the Old Testament. Yet, as he begins to take stock of his life, he concludes all that he worked for, dreamed about, and took pride in was nothing, just “Vanity” (Ecclesiastes 2:15). With all the success he gained, power he accrued, fun he had, pleasure he enjoyed, and beauty he created, he still was missing this key

ingredient to living wholly, fully, and beautifully. The lack of love he had in his life was palpable. At least in the parable, it was all about him. The result yielded the rich man’s equivalent of a noisy gong or clanging symbol. We will see great riches and works of art today. In the midst of it, make it a point to learn from the mistakes of others and the warnings of the Bible. Love freely and well. Consider the richness of your life in comparison with the material things we will see. See if the wisdom from Ecclesiastes and I Corinthians still has anything to say today. And work diligently today to expand the boundaries of your love. Then see if, as you try, your heart softens, your attitude changes and your life becomes all the richer.



What I Saw and Learned Today:

St. Petersburg, Day 2

September 9, 2014

In awe of the beauty of God's world ...



Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling... (Philippians 2:12)

Imagine the “work out” of the above verse to be an exercise routine. We know this to be a good thing that offers physical, mental, and emotional benefits. Good exercise is necessary for a healthy lifestyle.

In the same way, we can exercise our minds and spirits, taking our faith seriously and spending time “working out” our salvation as if we were participating in an exercise class on our Norwegian Star. In such a “class,” you would not be in *fear and trembling*. Instead, as your spirit became more “fit,” your *awe and wonder* would grow, your understanding would deepen and your inquisitiveness would continue to expand. For today, consider these spiritual exercises:

View the world in St. Petersburg that we will see today as a gift from God. Look for opportunities to show kindness. Smile. Recognize sacred moments. Notice colors. Feel the breeze. Learn something new. Sit in the shade and watch the world for five minutes without moving. Pray for a friend in need. Give thanks for that friend and for the gift of friendship. Keep on trying.



It's hard to beat a person who never gives up ...

- Babe Ruth

A window into sadness, tragedy and resilience ...

Geerkt Mak, in his classic travel diary *In Europe: Travels through the Twentieth Century*, records the following words. They are from a diary of an eleven year-old girl named Tanya Savitsyeva. These are her only entries from 1941-42.

Zyenyta died, 28 December, 12:00 a.m. Grandmother died, 25 January. 1942, 3 p.m. Leka died, 17 March, 5 p.m. Uncle Vasya died, 13 April, 2 p.m. Unaleksei, 10 May. Mama died 13 May, 7:30 a.m. The Savitsyeva family is dead.

Following page: "They are all dead."

Following page: "I am here alone."

Tanya was finally evacuated but soon after, she died in an orphanage in 1944. She was thirteen. Her thin, light blue diary is on display in the St. Petersburg Municipal Museum.

Today, the thriving, wild, spectacular, sparkling city of St. Petersburg belies the stormy past of revolution, invasion, siege, starvation, and the stark, seventy years of communism. Instead, St. Petersburg's history is flamboyantly folded into the culture and sophistication of architecture, engineering and wild panache...



St. Petersburg – a place where east meets west...

When the Christianity of the Eastern Church came under threat and ultimately succumbed to the Ottoman Turks in 1453, the Russian Orthodox Church unofficially took on the role of protector of the faith for Eastern (or Eastern Orthodox) Christianity. As St. Petersburg began in the early 18th century, this eastern influence can still be seen in the domes and architectural styles of its many churches. Other buildings, however, look much more like France and Italy.



St. Petersburg is a drama of light and shadow, water and land and sky and architectural marvels. Around every turn, at every bend, on every bridge, be prepared to be surprised.

Today's Prayer

We pray Your blessings as we gather in a land far from home to learn of other cultures and other people. We seek to be Your servants as we show the grace and peace that comes through our knowledge and love for you. We pray that our hearts and our minds be open to see your beauty in those that we meet and the things that we encounter in our travels. We ask your blessings on our families, our travels, and our friends, old and new. We pray that our words and our deeds be a true reflection our faith in you. Amen

- Tom Philson

What I Saw and Learned Today:

Helsinki, Finland!

September 10, 2014

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure (Philippians 2:12-13).



In both Helsinki and St. Petersburg after the fall of communism, much of each city was under construction. Though the Finns were not in the Warsaw Pact and made no secret of their pro-western bias, they had to be careful not to seem too enthusiastic about the free market or any overt ties with western economies. But after Michael Gorbachev led the Soviet Union to open up, restructure and loosen its grip on its neighbors, there was a new day in Finland. Once the country was set free from the long, dark shadow of Soviet imperialism, a building boom began. The same was true in St. Petersburg. Cranes were everywhere, moving, building, painting, tearing down, building up, renovating. There was great excitement in both places. Much was happening. Positive changes were taking place. Helsinki and St. Petersburg were under construction. Today's scripture is a reminder that God is at work in you. You are under construction. Will you continue to "work out" your spiritual self in valuable ways? And in conjunction with yesterday's passage, this scripture reminds us of a deeper truth: *you are not working out your salvation on your own.* You are being strengthened "to will," (that is, to make choices), and "to work" for God's good pleasure. Today, embrace a sense of sacredness in the decisions you make and what you do. Learn something new and exciting. Ask good questions. Seek out substantive answers. Notice, claim, and remember the good that is happening in you.

Finland – a beautiful

land a lovely people and a rich history ...

Size: *slightly smaller than Montana*

Population: *5,250,275 (2009 est.)*

Language: *Finnish and Swedish are both official*

Government: *Constitutional Republic*

Currency: Euro

(Along with Finnish, it is considered official). Russia gained control of Finland during the Napoleonic Wars in 1809, and the Swedish influence began to give way to Russian. It was not the language so much as it was lots of public display – churches, palaces and statues. The Russians also controlled Helsinki harbor and other important ports. Since 1917 and the Russian Revolution, Finland has done its best to keep Russia at arms length including heroic, successful fighting in WWII against a far superior Russian force. Now Finland boasts one of the more successful economies in all of Europe.



**Retail therapy
in the midst of
loveliness!**

Today's Prayer:

Thank you, O God, for all that we are experiencing – the friendship, the food, the scenery, the people, the new insights ... so much that we cannot yet fully comprehend all that we have been a part of. Let us never take for granted the good and fortunate lives that we lead. But also allow us a new appreciation for the many people and places that we are seeing. Grant us the wisdom for honest and grateful appraisals of these different cultures, as well as our own. And guide us for the future, giving us understanding, insight and a broader vision for the hopes you have for us all. Amen. - David Jordan

Almost 2000 years ago, the ancestors of today's Finns migrated to this lovely Baltic area from Central Asia. The Finnish language belongs to the same language group as Turkish and Hungarian. Finnish is also similar to and more closely related to Estonian. In the 1200's, Finland came under the control of Sweden. As a result, from the Reformation on (from the mid-1500s) most Finns are Lutheran, and Swedish is a very widely spoken second language

Things I Saw and Learned



Psalm 139:13-16

For it was you who formed my inward parts;
You knit me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.
My frame was not hidden from you,
When I was being made in secret,
Intricately woven in the depths of the earth.
Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.
In your book were written
All the days that were formed for me...

When none of them as yet existed.

*The most wasted
of all days is one
without laughter.*

- e.e. cummings

Stockholm, Sweden

*Anticipate good things.
Work for better things.*



Deep water ...

*The purposes in
the human mind
are like deep
water, but the
intelligent will
draw them out.*

Proverbs 20:5

Clean, Orderly, Lovely: Stockholm

The area around Stockholm has been, since Sweden's earliest history, the centerpiece of Swedish life. Vikings first camped and left from these islands making up the exquisite city that will surround us today. 1250 is year the first fortified town is recorded. It began on a single island and became known as Gamla Stan, the current Old Town of Stockholm. Here we will find the calm and gentle Swedish people speak softly, smile

warmly and love to share their capital city with visitors like us. So expect to be welcomed with fine hospitality and excellent English. Most Swedes begin learning English, often along with German, in Kindergarten. Modern Stockholm is known as the Venice of the North (not to be confused with St. Petersburg!) since the city spans 14 islands connected by a creative combination of bridges and boats.



Prayer for the Day

Dear Heavenly Father, on this day we approach the beautiful city of Stockholm. We are thankful for your grace and mercy which has allowed us to experience the beauty of the Baltic area and be enriched by it. Grant that we may always appreciate the blessing of being in your loving care wherever we may be led by you.

- Pauline Bethea

The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmaments proclaim God's handiwork (Psalm 19:1).

There are limits, certainly, to seeing God's handiwork in the goodness of nature. St. Francis of Assisi was painfully aware of human foibles and how cruel life can appear. Yet still, he, like the psalmist quoted above, recognized in nature God's hand—the quiet,

day-to-day rhythms of light and darkness, wind and rain, seasons and sunshine. We see this in his verse from "A Canticle of Brother Sun":

Praised be my Lord, by means of all your creatures, and most especially by Sir Brother

Sun, who makes the day and illumines us by his light: For he is beautiful and radiant with great splendor; and is a symbol of you, God most high.

Today, seek the truth and beauty of God's world. Live with assurance that you are an integral part. And see in Stockholm the rhythm, purity and order of God's good and hopeful intentions.

"A little simplification would be the first step toward rational living, I think."

- Eleanor Roosevelt



At Sea: Last Day!

Day 10

September 12, 2014



Into Jesus' Hands

There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two small fish ... but what are they among so many?

(John 6:9)

Sometimes simple gifts are the most profound. And having been surrounded by luxurious accommodations and indescribable beauty, perhaps this is a good reminder for us as we prepare to return back to the real world of our lives.

In this sixth chapter of John, Jesus has been preaching to this huge crowd of people. It has been a long day, and Jesus becomes concerned about the crowd and their hunger. He asks the disciples, "Where shall we buy bread so that they may eat?"

Philip replies, "A whole week's pay wouldn't buy enough food for all of these people!"

Then Andrew, Peter's brother chimes in: "Wait, there is a boy here with five barley loaves and two small fish. But what is that among so many?"

Continued on the next page ...



Prayer for the Day

Our Loving Heavenly Father, we are ever grateful and amazed that you have touched the earth with such beauty. We have seen that beauty - in the natural beauty of the sea and the countries we have visited, in the beauty and the spirit of the people we have encountered and in the beauty of the cities we have toured. We pray that as you have touched the earth with beauty and love, you will re-create our hearts to reflect that beauty as we seek to serve and minister to others. We praise your name in all the earth, Lord. Amen. - Ann Long-Jones



Surely that little boy stood in awe, seeing the miracle of his multiplied generosity; may the same be true for us...

Continued from previous page...

This, of course, is the prelude to John's version of the "Feeding of the Five Thousand," an important story in the other three Gospels, too. But here, it is a simple gift from an unnamed boy that initiates a miracle. Notice, he doesn't stop to think: "The crowd is so big and my gift is so small, what difference can I possibly make?" Instead, his quiet offering changes everything. Here, one person's simple gift and attitude of giving can do to the dynamics of a crowd - how one, simple perspective can offer drastic, positive change.

Imagine you are there, hungry, tired, ready to complain about the long trip home and the lack of food. Then you see a little boy offer his simple gift - not nearly enough

to feed sufficiently even those immediately around him. But from this young man's generous gesture, a seed is planted in you - and in others who witness the gift.

Now, perhaps there are others around you who also brought small amounts of food, just for themselves. The boy's witness presents a challenge—and an example. You, and others, too, are moved to offer what you have to Jesus, too. Before long, there's a shift in the attitude of the crowd, now inspired to be like that boy—to give what they have into Jesus' hands.

So trust your generosity and some simple gift into God's broader wisdom. And as you return home, may your life be an open and ready gift, offered always into the gentle hands of Jesus.

Love, David

Things I saw and learned today:

Hear Again the Cry for Justice

*Hear again the words of Scripture,
linger long at Jesus' feet.
Let the message grow within us
'til our prayers and actions meet.*

*May we listen, may we worship,
then obey the Spirit's prod,
Doing justly, loving mercy,
walking humbly with our God.*

- by Diane Jordan (David's momma!)



Don't cry because it's over, smile because it happened. - Dr. Suess
"I thank my God every time I remember you ... with joy" (Philippians 1:3)

Psalm 139:7-18

Where can I go from your spirit?
Or where can I go from your presence?
If I ascend to heaven, you are there;
if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.
If I take to the wings of the morning,
and settle at the farthest limits of the sea
Even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me fast.
If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light around me become night."
Even the darkness is not dark to you;
the night is as bright as the day,
For darkness is as light to you.
For it was you who formed my inward parts;
You knit me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.
My frame was not hidden from you,
When I was being made in secret,
Intricately woven in the depths of the earth.
Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.
In your book were written
All the days that were formed for me,
When none of them as yet existed.
How weighty are your thoughts,
O God! How vast the sum of them!
I try to count them –
They are more than the sand;
I come to the end – I am still with you.