

winds and must start all over again. If you drop into the library sometime or look up on YouTube the title of the book "Fall is not Easy" by Marty Kelley. A cute illustrated story about a tree that suffers from change. Being a five-minute read, it is worth your time. Read Romans 8:22-23. As creation waits and time passes day by day, we too wait God's return. And the awesome thing is that our waiting will not be in vain. We wait as people of hope – that is, as people who know what REAL hope is all about, because our hope lies in Jesus. We know that we will all be in the new creation due to Jesus' victory over death. And while we wait in the pains of changes and brokenness and sin, we know that our Lord will use all of us (see Romans 8:28) for His glory and for the good of us, His children. Give thanks to Him today for the hope He has given to you.

### **Saturday – Glory in the Kingdom**

Read Revelation 7:7-19. What a list of the people who have gone before us into God's kingdom! Of course, the good news is you and I will join those saints one day in glory, in heaven. Here on earth, we are made whole through baptism, communion, and the repentance and forgiveness of our sin, but the day we fulfill these powerful prophesies of Isaiah, we will shed the dark side of ourselves and enter the kingdom in the presence of Jesus, in his great glory. We pray "Thy kingdom come". This day is our freedom from sin and where we join the saints of old to start our eternity in that kingdom. What else strikes you from these beautiful and powerful verses from Revelation and the worship going on there? There are some amazing images of God, of the Kingdom, of worship, and of all His saints. Reflect on those images as you prepare in your heart and mind for our worship together tomorrow when we will once again gather around the throne and around the Lamb!

#### **IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH AND SCHOOL**

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### **What Now?**

1. This week try to do one thing that expresses your belief in the "Kingdom life" you've been given by our Lord.
2. Consider memorizing (or re-memorizing) the 2<sup>nd</sup> Petition of the Lord's Prayer and Martin Luther's Explanation of it: "Thy Kingdom come. *What does this mean?* The kingdom of God certainly comes by itself without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may come to us also. *How does God's kingdom come?* God's kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word and lead godly lives here in time and there in eternity."

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## **Monday — Power in God's Kingdom**

As we pray, "Thy kingdom come," we are searching for God's presence to be among us; to come and join our day to day life. Read John 3:1-8. Nicodemus approaches Jesus in private during the night to ask Him, "How?" What Jesus is doing in His time on earth is unlike anything Nicodemus has seen. There is power behind Jesus' miracles and teaching. Like Nicodemus, we can approach Jesus in prayer and ask "What You are doing is great! How can I get about doing this work?" There is power in the kingdom, so powerful we can be reborn into the work of God. The fields are ready for the harvest, ready for you and me to step in and be God's tools to advance His kingdom and to share His love. Let's use God's kingdom power to go do His work.

## **Tuesday — God's Kingdom, Gracefully Re-done**

Check out the creation story in Genesis chapters 1 and 2:1-3. All that God made was good! He made everything in its place and saw it to completion. The world and all that was in it was perfect. Sadly, we all know the next part of the story firsthand. Sin enters this perfection, and so the struggle begins. Think for a moment about what sin (your sin and mine) has done to impact God's kingdom. God's world is good, we are created in God's image, but all fall short of the kingdom of God because of our sin. Through the grace given to us by Jesus' work on the cross and His resurrection from the grave, we live in the promise that God will build a new heaven and earth where we will be in His perfect kingdom forever. We also know that this re-doing work of our Lord through His grace is not just something that will happen "some day." No, that work is happening right here, right now, today! That's the power of grace at work. The re-doing and re-building happens each and every day when we experience again the fresh start of forgiveness and share that gift of grace and Christ's love with others in our lives. Yes, we look forward to seeing the completed project but how exciting is it to be part of the "ground floor"?! Keep your eyes and hearts open to being and seeing God's grace in action and his kingdom coming.

## **Wednesday — Kingdom Power on Earth**

Yesterday's devotion mentioned the struggle between good and evil in creation and in our lives. Read Luke 10:17-20. Jesus' disciples are sent out to work in this earthly kingdom and they return to Jesus bragging that even the demons obey their words! I picture Jesus in this situation in the role of a sports team coach. He calls a huddle, pats everyone on the shoulder and tells them, "Yes, yes, you did a great job, but there is so much more! We won the game, but the playoffs are soon to come." He reminds His disciples to rejoice that

their names are written in the book of heaven. They were able to demonstrate the power of God's kingdom here on earth, but almost forgot the joy of the kingdom that will come for eternity. We witness the power of God's kingdom in very real ways here on earth. He provides in miraculous ways, heals physical ills and heartache, blesses us with the fruits of the spirit to guide our day, gives us sunrise to sunset to enjoy the beauty of the mountains and plains around us, and sleep in between to refresh us for the next tomorrow. All these gifts on earth to show His power over creation and all in it, we too can so easily believe that this is a pretty good place to be. Dwell a moment on the thought of heaven. All that is good and in the presence of Jesus, the One who saves us. God gives us power to share this thought with others and through repentance and God's grace, our names are also written in the book or the forever kingdom.

## **Thursday — History of Kingdom Grace**

In Romans 6:23, the Lord tells us in his Word, "The wages of sin is death." We cannot escape this fate. This earthly kingdom will go away, but God's grace paves the way for our future with Him. We are not the only generations to be waiting for the return of the kingdom. Old Testament people waited to be released from captivity before the Passover. The prophets told the people to wait for the Messiah to come and reign. Jesus' disciples waited for his triumphant entry into Jerusalem and saw his "defeat" on the cross. They waited the three days, terrified of their future, only to hear the news that Jesus is alive. So starts the wait for Jesus' triumphant return, the early church through the church today. By God's command and through his grace we baptize – washing away our sin and living with the Spirit in us; we commune – together as a whole church of Christians we eat and drink and remember the gift of Jesus to forgive us; and we praise the name of Jesus and ask for His kingdom to come. His redemption, buying us out of our sin, is our hope and assurance of our future with Him in His kingdom. So, yes, the wages of sin is death, but the life, death and resurrection of Jesus leaves us waiting for His return and assured that we will join the saints in heaven because of Jesus provision.

## **Friday — Glory for Creation**

On Tuesday we looked at the creation story and all the wonderful items God checked off His six day list before His sabbath rest. I wonder if all creation is waiting for God's kingdom return to be made whole again. For example, animals must migrate to where fresh food is growing. Along the way, some are eaten by other animals. Seasons change, flowers in spring bloom into beauty only to wither with winter