

HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 3/7/2022

Dear Friends in Christ,

ONE AT ONE – Every day this week beginning on Tuesday, March 8 you are encouraged to pray for one minute at one o'clock. This week, continue pray for the people of Ukraine. Pray for a just piece that allows the people to retain dignity and hope. Ask God to guide leaders in equitable decisions that put the needs of people ahead of geopolitical agendas. Give thanks for nations and organizations like Lutheran World Relief, that are working to bring comfort and hope to those caught in this horrendous situation.

Imagine for a moment that you are waiting in line inside your bank. There are about 30 other people there, both customers and employees. Then a masked man walks in with a gun and fires one shot, hitting you in the arm. Do you consider yourself fortunate or unfortunate, lucky or unlucky? Really take a moment and answer that question. Now, take another moment to list the reasons for your answer?

About seventy percent of people will say they were unfortunate. Their answers will include the injury they received, this disruption of their plans for the day, their misfortune for being in the bank at that time, and even question why they were shot and not someone else. About thirty percent will say they were fortunate. Their reasons for feeling this way include that they could have been injured much worse, that they're glad someone else was not shot, and some will even say they might be able to sell their story to a newspaper or television station. People in the first group may find themselves surprised by the answers of those in the second group. It may not even occur to them to look at things in this more positive light.

I think my brother, Joel, would have been in the second group. In 2004, Joel was diagnosed with lung cancer and given a five percent chance of living two years. On one visit to his doctor in 2010, six years after the initial diagnosis, Joel was told that the cancer had metastasized, that it was now in his liver and spine. He said, "That's great!" with enthusiasm.

The doctor looked at Joel and said, "No, you don't understand. The cancer has spread."

Joel said, "Oh, I got that. But that's good news, because now that we know where it is, we can work on treating it there, too."

Joel lived until October of 2014.

When you receive "bad" news from the doctor, do you lament about your situation, or do you give thanks to God for the medical advances that resulted in them finding what's wrong and that provide treatment options? During the pandemic, have you complained about the troublesomeness and limitations that have come from this virus or do you praise God for the science that has quickly found vaccines and guided us toward behaviors that might better protect us and others? When you are stuck in traffic, do you moan about the inconvenience of the delay, or do you pray for those who might be in distress, and rejoice that you are safe? When you go to worship, do you think about the parts of the service that you dislike, or do you give glory to God for the opportunity to worship, for the worship

aspects that are meaningful to you and others, and for the individuals who give of themselves to provide these worship experiences?

We can actually develop a more positive outlook on life by intentionally searching for that which has value to us. We can train our brains to get more enjoyment and value out of the situations in which we find ourselves. After an occurrence, whether a normal event or something unexpected, take a moment to sit down and list three good things about what happened. Do this even with the most regular activities, like preparing a meal, or doing chores or tasks, or your job, or being with your family. When you do this, you force your brain to intentionally look for the positive. Repeating this activity of listing three positives at least once a day can create a mindset that instead of just noticing the annoying, inconvenient, or disliked, seeks to see what is valuable, worthwhile, and perhaps, even a blessing.

In Christ's love,
Pastor Jeffrey