

HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 9/2/2022

Dear Friends in CHRIST,

Martin Luther was a master at connecting faith to life. He saw no separation from what happens on Sunday and what happens the rest of the week. Every single day was an opportunity to praise and serve GOD through our words and actions.

I've written before about how Luther once said, "The Christian shoemaker does his duty not by putting little crosses on the shoes, but by making good shoes, because GOD is interested in good craftsmanship." Luther was saying that we show and share our Christian faith, not by flashing the symbols of our of faith (though displaying them is a good way to witness), but by doing our very best. First, it pleases GOD that we are appreciative for the opportunity to work. Second, we are showing, especially to those who know we are Christians, that our faith calls us to do our very best as a blessing to those we have been gifted to serve. How we live our lives is part of our witness to the world of our love for GOD.

Another quote of Luther's that reflects this daily connection to GOD is, "To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing." Prayer is much more than stopping, bowing our heads, and offering a more formal-feeling petition to GOD. Prayer is a way of talking with GOD, recognizing that GOD is present with us all the time. It can be done conversationally in our head or aloud. A simple, "Thank you, GOD," or "GOD, that's beautiful," or "GOD, please help that person," or "GOD, go with me as a go to my next chore," all reflect that relationship. Prayer becomes a regular part of our daily life and develops into a normal activity, just like breathing.

Being aware of GOD'S presence comes as we try to see GOD in the world around us. Luther said, "GOD writes the Gospel not in the Bible alone, but also on trees, and in the flowers and clouds and stars." The world is filled with reminders of GOD'S creative power and beauty. Whether it be in nature or in the people we meet, GOD'S presence is shown around us all the time, to remind us that GOD is with us. GOD also provides us with opportunities to recognize and respond to GOD as we care for creation and for those we encounter.

Luther was asked on one occasion, "What would you do today if you knew the world was going to end tomorrow?" He replied, "Even if I knew that tomorrow the world would go to pieces, I would still plant my apple trees." Luther's hope was that everything he did each day was pleasing to GOD. Planting apple trees was a sign of his trust in GOD'S providence and recognition that GOD was in control of the future. Being Christian does have to mean elaborate gestures that call attention to our faith. Rather, knowing that GOD loves us, has forgiven us, and promised us an eternal future with GOD should help us recognize that everything we do each day is at testimony to our faith in GOD.

In CHRIST'S love,
Pastor Jeffrey