

“In Christ We Are a New Creation”

High Sierra Backpacking in the Emigrant Wilderness 2013 Devotional



*“In Christ we are a new creation.
The past is forgotten, behold everything is new.”
2 Corinthians 5:17*

**Community Lutheran Church
Rancho Santa Margarita, CA**

Day 1

Psalm 139:13-14

*13 For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your
works are wonderful, I know that full well.*

Today I feel like I have been given a great gift. Maybe you feel the same way. God has given me the opportunity to see His creation in a way very few people ever do. If you have ever been to LEGOLAND or have seen a model train village, you notice how small everything looks. But in the mountains we can't help but notice that we are but a small part of a grand universe. The mountains tower around us and the stars fill the sky with God's glory.

And yet the Bible tells us that the same God who created the entire universe, knit you together in your mother's womb. You are fearfully (think fear, as in awe), and wonderfully made. We may be tempted to think otherwise, when we start to get down on ourselves, or think negative thoughts about our body or our abilities. But remember today's promise straight from God. “I am fearfully and wonderfully made.” God doesn't make junk. God's works are wonderful – wonder-filled. Thank God!

Prayer: *Creator God, help me trust your promise that you made me and love me. Help me turn my eyes to you this week and give you praise for all that you have made.
Amen*

Song: “For the beauty of the earth, for the beauty of the skies, for the love which from our birth, over and around us lies: Christ, our Lord to you we raise, this our sacrifice of praise.” (ELW 879)

Day 2

2 Corinthians 5:17

*“In Christ we are a new creation.
The past is forgotten, behold everything is new.”*

Today you may not feel like such a new creation. Your body may be feeling any number of aches and pains. Today you may need to hold on to the promise that God is not only our Creator, but God heals our bodies and renews our minds and souls. I was talking with someone who has been on this backpacking trip several times and keeps coming back even though he knows the first few days are rough. With joy in his eyes, he told me how much he looks forward to this trip every year. Each backpacking trip is kind of like moving from Dec. 31 to Jan. 1. It is a time to let the hurts and heartaches, and the resentments and regrets of the past year be forgiven and forgotten.

That’s my prayer for you today. Take a few moments to pray for God’s cleansing and renewing waters to wash over you. Jesus says, “Come to me, all who are burdened and heavy laden and I will give you rest.” Give your burdens to Jesus. Let Jesus lift the weight of anything that holds you down. Trust in God’s promise today, “In Christ, you are a new creation. The past is forgotten, behold everything is new.”

Prayer: *Dear Jesus, thank you for taking all my sins and regrets to the cross. Thank you for forgiving me and making me new. Today and this week, help me practice letting go.*

Song: “I am the resurrection and the life; All who believe in me will never die. I am the resurrection and the life; all who believe in me will live a new life.”

Day 3

2 Corinthians 5:7

“For we live by faith, not by sight.”

Has anyone encouraged you to “Let go and Let God”? Sometimes that isn’t so easy. We understand that by holding on to a problem and rehearsing it in our minds over and over again, we don’t make things any better. We know that we live in a sinful world and that the sins of others and our own sins hold us captive. Without Christ we are without hope.

But thank God that the Holy Spirit creates within us a beautiful thing called faith. Hebrews 11:1 says that, “Faith is confidence in what we hope for, and assurance about what we do not see.”

The Holy Spirit continues to come along beside us and breathe life into us. Take a deep breath. Breathe in the life that God has for you today. Take comfort in knowing that God never leaves you or abandons you. God is calling you today to trust Him. Trust that you are in His care. God is calling you to live not by sight, not by what you think you can control with your own actions, but by faith. And if you are having trouble letting go, God can even move in your heart to release your grip, and open your hands. Do that now as you pray. Open your hands to the sky and pray these words: *“Holy Spirit, move within me today. Release all that I hold tight. I give it to you now. Give me faith that I might live in you, and trust in your care. Amen*

Song: “Oh dear Lord, three things I pray: To see thee more clearly, love thee more dearly, follow thee more nearly, day by day.”

Day 4

2 Corinthians 5:16

“So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view.”

What is a worldly point of view? Do you remember the story when Peter gets into hot water with Jesus? No, not the time he walked on water (that was probably a bit chilly). I’m talking about the time when Jesus began to tell his disciples about his path to the cross: that he must suffer, and be rejected, and be killed and after three days rise again. Mark tells us that Peter took Jesus aside and began to rebuke him. Can you picture yourself rebuking Jesus? Telling Jesus he must be wrong? Telling Jesus to stop talking that way?

Well, Jesus would have none of that. He told Peter, “Get behind me Satan! You do not have in mind the things of God, but of humans.” You see, whenever we look at the world through our own eyes, through our own idea of how things should be, we can be so far off. Like Peter we can be missing what God has in mind for us. What does God have in mind for us? Jesus called it “the kingdom of God.” In other words, “the way the world was meant to be with Jesus on the throne.” The kingdom of God comes near when Jesus rules in our heart and minds.

Prayer: *Jesus, today I ask you to help me see through your eyes. Help me to treat others as you would. Help me to serve and love everyone as you did. Rule in me. Amen.*

Song: “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you. Allelu, Alleluia.”

Day 5

John 10:10

“I have come that you may have life –life overflowing.”

I happen to love water. I love lakes and streams. I love rivers and oceans. And most of all I love waterfalls. I never get tired of watching water cascading over a falls. It seems incredible to me that water can continue flowing hour after hour, day after day, and year after year at such a tremendous rate. John Muir’s description of Yosemite Falls is enough to take your breath away.

But think of this. As wonderful and incredible as waterfalls are, the life that God pours into your heart is even more amazing. Jesus tells us that the devil is a liar. The devil tries to put glitter and shiny lights on all the things that actually hurt us and lead to death. But Jesus, comes to do the opposite. Jesus gives us commandments to protect us from the things that rob us of life and Jesus calls us to seek first his kingdom, his ways. And when we do, when we remain in Him, when we live our lives in Him, we experience life – life overflowing.

Prayer: *Heavenly Father, thank you for the gift of your Son, Jesus. Thank you that you sent him into this world not to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. Amen.*

Song: “I’ve got a river of life flowing out of me, makes the lame to walk and the blind to see. Opens prison doors sets the captives free. I’ve got a river of life flowing out of me.

Spring up a well, within my soul. Spring up a well, and make me whole. Spring up a well, and give to me. Life, abundantly.”

Day 6

2 Corinthians 5:18-19

“All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.”

Have you thought much lately about what Jesus did for us on the cross? Take a moment to think about it now. What does it mean to you personally? What difference would it make in your life if Jesus was just a good teacher, a wise man, but not the Son of God?

Every other world religion is based on the idea that we need to find our way up to God. We need to climb some kind of moral ladder and by doing good things we will please God and God will accept us.

God reversed the direction of all our man-made ladders and came down to us in the person of Jesus Christ. Nik Wallenda amazed us by crossing Niagara Falls and the little Grand Canyon on a tight rope. But we can’t cross the chasm caused by our sin. We can’t climb high enough or far enough. And if we think we are doing pretty well all on our own, “Hey look at me, I’m better than that poor sinner over there” guess what? That’s when we are the most vulnerable to falling.

Prayer: *Jesus, thank you for closing the gap. Thank you for reconciling us to our Father in Heaven. Thank you for not holding my sins against me. Help me love like you love.*

Song: “And they’ll know we are Christians by our love, by our love, yes they’ll know we are Christians by our love.”

Day 7

2 Corinthians 5:20-21

“We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

Today as we take the first steps on our journey home, let us pause and thank God again for the amazing beauty of this place and for our spiritual journey of this past week.

Thank you God for creating such a beautiful world for us to enjoy. Thank you for reminding me that you also rejoiced when you made me, that I was created in your image, and that I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

Thank you God that I can give my burdens to you and experience your peace and your healing.

Thank you for the gift of faith. As I return home, help me each day to take time with you. Help me open my hands to the sky and let go, trusting you in all things. Help me see the world through your eyes. Rule in my heart and my mind. Fill me with life over-flowing.

Forgive me each day and reconcile me to you. Let me not keep this good news to myself, but let me be your ambassador. Show me a person in my life who does not know you, and work through me to share your love. Let me live my life as a new creation in you. Amen.

Song: “O God, you are my God, and I will ever praise you.

(repeat)

I will seek you in the morning, and I will learn to walk in your ways, and step by step you’ll lead me, and I will follow you all of my days.”