

Weekly Health Update from Pastor Jim – Weekend of July 1/2, 2017

Dear Members of St. John

I went for blood work early in the week, but have not received the results. I am not expecting any problems, but we never know from one day to the next. I guess that is why Jesus always reminds us to take one day at a time. I still have that red itchy rash all over my body which is the reaction to what is going on at the bone marrow side of things. There is a war going on inside my body, where the old stem cells are dying off and the new stem cells are trying to take over and produce new bone marrow. I am praying that this reaction will soon come to an end. God continually surprises us with His answers to prayer. We either keep praying until God answers our prayers, or we come to the point where we realize God may be saying “No” to that prayer, because He has something better in mind.

We can often become so discouraged when faced with unanswered prayer, and we may even think that God may not love us. But nothing could be further from the truth. Paul writes in Romans 8:32, “He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?” We all learned from our parents, growing up, that not everything we asked for as children was met with a “yes.” Sometimes our parents had to tell us “No,” and we understood that “No” did not mean, *I don't love you*. No just meant *No, because I am your parent and I know what's best for you*.

Throughout life, I believe that's what God was teaching me. If He says no, it isn't because He doesn't love me, but because He knows what's best for me ... even if I don't understand and believe you me, there are many things I do not understand.

I don't know what you're facing, but I do know God is our heavenly Father who loves us and knows what's best for us. The Bible encourages us: “*Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight*” (Proverbs 3:5-6).

Even though I don't understand the “whys” of broken dreams, I do know that shattered dreams often become the pieces for a beautiful mosaic we never even thought to imagine. Trials rip away the flimsy fabric of self-sufficiency and provide raw material for unexpected miracles to happen in our lives. Life's trails often teach us to trust God with our broken dreams, in order to experience better dreams. The question we always have to ask is are you willing to trust God with yours dreams?

As we celebrate our Nation's independence this weekend, we all have a great number of freedoms that we enjoy but often take for granted. The fact that we can worship our Great God in comfort and security is by far one of the best freedoms. Remember to pause this weekend, sometime, to give God thanks and praise for this wonderful blessing.

Love you all. Pastor Jim

Weekly Health Update from Pastor Jim – Weekend of July 8/9, 2017

Dear Members of St. John

On Monday, I had three appointments downtown at the Clinic, labs, pulmonary function test and meeting with my transplant doctor. I am still itchy, and while not as bad, it is still aggravating and bothersome. There just does not seem to be anything I can take to make it all go away.

We are all aware of being “schooled by life.” It simply means that God uses the events and circumstances of our lives to teach us powerful lessons, and which more than likely, cannot be learned in any other way. Many of these disappointing areas aren't all due to my weakness. Sometimes God holds back success with the divine purpose of teaching me something. I think that's what happened to the disciples, in John 21.

One night, a few of the disciples went fishing. These guys were born to fish. But that night, after hours floating in the silent dark, they caught nothing. The story takes an interesting turn as the sun starts to rise. Jesus stood on the edge of the lake (although they didn't recognize Him at first). I'm sure He'd been watching them for hours ... maybe even all night.

Jesus needed to teach His disciples an important lesson. And in order to learn it well, they had to experience some failure. Jesus spoke to the weary fishermen, as we read in John 21:5b-6a, “Friends, haven't you any fish?” “No,” they answered. He said, “Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.”

Scripture doesn't record the disciples' thoughts, but I can imagine they were a bit annoyed at this piece of advice. After all, they were professional fishermen, doing everything they knew to do. The fish obviously weren't there! Have you ever felt that way about your life? You've done everything you know to do, but nothing changes?

The disciples were about to learn an important lesson about success and failure. They obeyed Jesus' directive, shifted the nets to the other side of the boat, and Scripture records: "When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish" (John 21:6). Jesus needed the disciples to see the difference between self-directed effort and Jesus-directed effort. And in order to show them, He let them fail on their own first. Oh, how I need to learn this lesson myself. I wonder if Jesus has watched me try on my own and held back success while I do. Is He just waiting for me to listen for His voice? To watch for His plan?

As I look back on my life, the times I've seen God work in the greatest ways are when I admit my natural strength isn't enough. That's when His supernatural strength is evident. Viewed from this perspective, I am reminded that we have a loving and caring God, who only wants what is best for His children. You can trust God with your life!

Peace and Blessings,
Pastor Jim

Weekly Health Update from Pastor Jim – Weekend of July 15 & 16, 2017

Dear Members of St. John

I had more blood work this week, as every week, and so far, the tests are all normal. I am getting stronger and less itchy, and I think things are turning the corner to health and well-being. Next week will be my first meeting with my transplant doctor and I will be all ears to see what she has to say regarding my progress.

God's love for you and me is passionate, pure and beyond anything we've ever experienced, accepting us as we are. Our good, our sins, our past and our flaws are all bare before His eyes, yet being the perfect Gentleman and Father He is, He washes, changes, teaches and grows us tenderly. He reminds us of our worth and beauty as His sons and daughters. He wants to forgive, bless and take care of us. He loves us with unconditional *agape* love.

Good news: His love never fails. (1 Corinthians 13:8) We can love like that, too — not in our own strength or willpower, but by the Holy Spirit perfecting God's love in our hearts. (1 John 4:12) The deeper we know God and His arduous, purposeful love for us and for others, the easier we can love others as an act of loving obedience to God.

First John 4:20 tells it like it is: "*If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.*" (NASB)

Of course. How can we defy God's command to love the people He has placed in our lives and *still* claim to love Him? Our obedience to God's Word comes from our love and reverence for Him who gave His *all* so we could keep on giving and loving like He has done for us.

It is only when we love God first and foremost that we can reach our full potential in loving others as friends, brothers and sisters, sons and daughters, husbands and wives and fathers and mothers. As we grow in our love for God and in our knowledge of His love, we begin to change. We begin to see and love others differently.

In reality, true love happens when the stars don't align, sparks dim and butterflies fly away. Love happens when we sacrifice, knowing we'll get nothing in return. We are patient, kind, never envious or boastful, modeling 1 Corinthians 13 in our hearts and with our behavior without expecting payback or accolade. We lay down our lives in love.

Today's key verse, 1 John 4:8 says, "*The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.*" I hope you find true love. I hope you and I grow so close to God that we naturally begin to "*love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith*" (1 Timothy 1:5b, NASB). May you and I so overflow with God's love that it runs up and over onto everyone we meet. His love will never fail, because God Himself is true love, and God never fails.

In the Love of Christ, Pastor Jim

Weekly Health Update from Pr. Jim – Weekend of July 23, 2017

Dear Members of St. John

I have always believed that what I have gone through ultimately was for my best. Did I like it? “No!” But, was it good for me? “Yes!” Why? Because I believe the opposite of pride is trust in God. Pride begs us to believe it all depends on us. Trusting God requires us to place our dependence on Him. And the pathway that leads us away from pride and into a place of truly trusting God is paved with something that brings us to an end of ourselves and humbles us. Humility is never bought at a cheap price. It will always cost us something but will be worth the price we pay.

In the Old Testament, we see God revealing this same kind of pride-stripping process by feeding the children of Israel manna in the desert for the purpose of humbling them. It was crucial that God prepare them to trust Him as they stepped from the desert into their destined Promised Land. Deuteronomy 8:2-3 says, “*Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years... ³ He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.*”

So why exactly was having to eat manna so humbling? And what can we glean from Deuteronomy 8:3 for our own lives today? I think there are three things:

1. **God is our provider.** The children of Israel were used to looking down at the ground in Egypt and working the land to provide for themselves. They trusted their own hard work for their provision. Now, they would need to look up and trust God for His provision.

2. **God’s provision is what we need but not always what we want.** This manna God provided was not like the normal food the Israelites were used to providing for themselves. But God knew it was the perfect nourishment for those in the desert. He knows our needs better than we do. Remember, God is more concerned about our ultimate good than our temporary pleasure.

3. **God’s provision protects our heart. Our desires have the potential of corrupting our heart.** Man-made bread is not what gives the fullness of life God desires for us. Man-made success, riches and popularity are the same way. They will not fulfill us like we think they will. Only the Word of God can seep into the hungry places of our souls and make the dead and discouraged places within come fully alive and deeply satisfied. We must want Him most of all. And then He will see our hearts are prepared and trustworthy to handle other things.

May we all choose to trust our great God and let that be the lens through which we process our lives and circumstances. May we see how God isn’t trying to break our hearts but rather make us ready for what He sees just ahead.

Loving you all very much, Pastor Jim

Weekly Health Update from Pastor Jim – Weekend of July 29 & 30, 2017

Dear Members of St. John

If ever you think that Jesus doesn’t love you as you suffer sickness, disease or some other tragedy, just remember the cross on which Jesus died. Jesus *loves* you and me and the cross is proof of that.

I met with my transplant doctor late last week and she said everything is progressing as expected and my blood work is great. She said I probably will be tired and sleep lots for another month or two, but that too is expected. She said she is now turning me over to my cancer doctor and she doesn’t want to see me again. She said that with a big smile on her face, because not seeing her again is really, really good news.

On these days it is very easy to feel Jesus’ love and care. But there are other days I feel messed up and maxed out, exasperated and exhausted. Some days I’m not grateful or gleeful, flexible or fun. And to be totally honest, some days I don’t even like myself.

Scripture reminds us that the One who took our place on Calvary’s cross doesn’t merely tolerate us through gritted teeth or embrace us because of holy compulsion. As preposterous as it sounds, **the One who first loved us, actually likes us, too.** And here’s proof:

- The Bible says God *takes joy* in us.
- Psalm 149:4 declares He *delights* in us.
- Zephaniah 3:17 affirms He *rejoices* over us.
- And Psalm 147:11 proclaims that we bring Him *pleasure*.

It's crazy when you think about it — that the perfect Prince of Heaven takes joy in His flawed followers made from the dust of earth. But when I remember this simple truth, it changes the way I pursue my Savior.

When I acknowledge that Jesus enjoys me, I look for ways to enjoy Him, too. I notice His kindness in the depths of my daily grind — the brazen sunset over the trees in my back yard, or the unexpected phone call from a friend on a hard day. I savor the song of the birds beyond my window, the unexplainable peace in my hurry, the echo of an encouraging Scripture verse that runs through my mind. In short, when I remember how the One who died for me also delights in me, I'm drawn to delight in Him, too.

So, I'm gonna keep singing that Sunday School song I learned as a child: *Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so*. My youngest grandson, Cameron came home from Sunday School, quoting this verse, "God so loved the world that He gave John, 3, 16." Yes, he got the verse a little mixed up but he understood the truth, He is only 4-years-old, but through a mouthful of peanut butter, he went on to say, "Jesus really likes me ... And you know what? I think He really really likes you, too ... soooooo much." That's truth from the mouth of babes. Believe it!

Loving you all lots, but not as much as Jesus does. Pastor Jim



Life Line Screening, a leading provider of community-based preventive health screenings will be in our community on Thursday, December 21, 2017 at Saint John Lutheran Church. Ultrasound screenings to identify risk factors for Cardiovascular disease include; **Carotid Artery** (plaque buildup-a leading cause of stroke), **Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm** (an enlargement or weak area in the main blood vessel that carries blood from the heart to the rest of the body), **Peripheral Arterial Disease** (hardening of the arteries in the legs), a **Heart Rhythm Screening** (an EKG to detect Atrial Fibrillation-irregular heartbeat) and an **Osteoporosis Risk Assessment** for men and women. Being proactive about your health by knowing your risks helps you and your doctor address problems early.

Register online TODAY at www.lifelinescreening.com/communitycircle and receive your Community Circle discount and your Preferred Appointment!



Our Nursery is open (currently unsupervised) across from the old Food Pantry room in the hallway. The sermon is broadcast over the sound system. Check it out! If you or someone you know can donate a window air conditioner for the nursery, please let the church office know.