

## Weekly Update from Pastor Jim – Weekend of November 5-6, 2016

Dear Members of St. John,

I met with my cancer doctor this week and he said that my numbers have started to go up, rather than down. That's the bad news. The good news is that the extra chemo drug that he wanted me on, he could get funding for it some other way. When I asked how? He said it was complicated. The other bad news is that my doctor wants me to do two more rounds of chemo with this additional drug. I am supposed to start with the new drug next Tuesday, plus get my regular injection. We will wait and see how I react to the new drug.

I struggle with the Lord's timing of things and we all do. Yes, I know that these additional rounds of chemo will get me ready for transplant, but that doctor visit was a huge disappointment. I came home to read a message from one of those water bottles: ***"Pastor Jim, we will be praying for you to wait on the Lord, so the time will be right for your transplant."*** Talk about the Lord's timing. It is during these low times for me, that the congregation's care and concern are of special importance. I have been saying lately, "I am sick and tired of being sick and tired." While that statement is true, it is not one that will lift my spirits or boost attitude. That's why your little "water bottle notes," letters and get well cards are so vital to keep me positive. Thank you for providing this ministry to me during these very difficult and dark days.

Through all this, God is continually reminding me that He is in charge and that all these additional rounds of chemo will work for my good. I especially know how hard it is to see or understand, but our God loves us so much that He has no choice but to give us good and perfect gifts. Jesus said it this way in Luke 11:11-13, "Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? <sup>12</sup> Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion?<sup>13</sup> If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" I am asking; I am pleading; I am begging, "Father, give me Your Holy Spirit to help make sense of what is going on." Amen.

Remember, you can always call me at 216-299-4869 any time. If I am laying down, I turn my phone off, so don't worry about any interruptions.

Love and miss you all very much,  
Pastor Jim

## Weekly Update from Pastor Jim – Weekend of November 12-13, 2016

Dear Members of St. John,

I started my first of three new rounds of chemo treatments this week including the new chemo drug. I am supposed to take an anti-nauseous med first, one hour before I take the new chemo capsules. This is to help me stomach accept the 12 pills, *yes twelve*, I take all at once. I must wait and see how I react to the new drug. Please keep praying that my body can tolerate the new drug and that it will really kick the crap out of the M protein in my system, and get me ready for transplant sometime in the New Year.

A couple of weeks ago I shared insight on Jacob wrestling with God and not letting go until God blessed him. God did bless him but also changed his name from Jacob to Israel, meaning to wrestle. God said to Jacob, "you have wrestled with God and overcome" (Genesis 32:28). When I read that verse, I question the thinking of Jacob to even attempt to wrestle with God. Maybe Jacob did not know he was actually wrestling with God, and like the old saying goes, "where fools rush in." But if Jacob did know he was wrestling with God, how in the world did he think he even had a possible chance of winning that contest? It would be like wanting to wrestle Superman. I would not have a chance, so why even start that contest.

I think God wants us to wrestle with Him and, like with Jacob, God lets us win. Why? Because in that contest, even though it is so one-sided, God wants us to grow in determination and consternation. That "never giving up" attitude and spirit God values highly in your life and mine.

When suffering comes into our lives, we too have the choice "to give up" or "to never give up." The choice is simple but to follow through on never giving up is not. The Grace of our great God is that He lets us win. He wants us to grow in our faithfulness to never give up, even when the battle is its fiercest. And then just at the right moment, God gives up and says, "You win."

I don't know what you are wrestling with God about in your life. I do know that if you sit down and give up, you have already lost the battle. But if you already know God will declare you the winner, why give up? In faith in Jesus Christ, we are all winners, because He has already beaten our arch enemies, sin, death and the devil. So, with cancer, heart-ache, tragedy or loss, the battle is ours to win. God said so! Believe it and fight on.

Missing and loving you all, more and more.

Pastor Jim

## Weekly Update from Pastor Jim – Weekend of November 19-20, 2016

Dear Members of St. John,

This week the second installment of chemo of this round. Somehow I was able to get the second chemo drug and so far, there has been no adverse reaction to it. I did take the anti-nauseous medicine one hour before I took the new chemo, and everything went fine. I am hoping and praying that this additional chemo drug will bring my numbers down so that I can move on to transplant. I know I have another round of chemo for December, and then it will be "see where my numbers are."

Through this process I have learn many things and one of them is "I don't like to wait." Even though the Bible says waiting is good; Lamentations 3:25, "The LORD is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him." Or, Psalm 62:5, "My soul, wait silently for God alone, For my expectation is from Him." I still don't like to wait.

But I have discovered that when in waiting, what we focus on makes all the difference. If you look below, you'll notice these two pictures are from the same spot. The difference? It's what I focused my lens on. The focused part is clear, sharp and what immediately your eyes are drawn to. The part that's out of focus is blurred, more difficult to see and not what your eye is instantly drawn to.

In the first image, my lens focused on the mess of my messy table, loads of paper, a empty coffee cup and my Bible. But amazingly, when I redirected the lens to the Bible, Isaiah 64:4, all the mess around me becomes blurred, out of focus and instead God's truth comes into focus!

Isaiah 64:4 "Since ancient times no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who acts on behalf of those who wait for Him." I know I'm refocusing the lens of my life on His truth. I pray that will be your focus as well!

I am holding you all in love and prayer, as you hold me in love and prayer.

Pastor Jim



## Weekly Update from Pastor Jim – Weekend of November 26-27, 2016

Dear Members of St. John,

This week I received my third chemo treatment for this round. I can't believe that I have had six rounds of chemo this far, and at least one more for December. I will have to wait and see what my numbers for the "M protein" look like to see if I will have to do additional rounds. Obviously, I hope not, but all that is in the Lord's hands.

This weekend most families across the United States will be celebrating Thanksgiving. I was thinking about being a grateful cancer survivor, but then I thought, what other choice do I have? Then in the back of my head, I

heard St. Paul's words in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 "Be joyful always; <sup>17</sup>pray continually; <sup>18</sup>give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

Every day, I try to name three things for which I am grateful. The key to this activity is to be specific. That means "my wife is loving" is too general. But to say, "I love the boiled dinner, my wife made for supper tonight" is good and specific. I have noticed that being grateful each day actually puts me into a better frame of mind. As Paul said, "Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." I cannot say I am thankful for cancer. I didn't ask for cancer and I didn't choose the cancer "journey" I'm on. Can God use my cancer to make me into a better and more mature person? Yes, of course. But I have had to look very hard some days to see how God is making that happen.

I have discovered that exercising gratitude helps keep me sane and is building resiliency. Resiliency is good stuff. Unfortunately, I don't come by it naturally. I would rather have control in my life, be the decision-maker, you know, the one in charge of my own destiny. But being a cancer survivor, we find ourselves at the whim of lab results, doctor follow-up visits and "scanxiety" (I made that word up. It is a combination of two words: "scans" and "anxiety.") All of that is enough to send anyone over the edge, unless we practice gratitude.

Giving thanks in "all circumstances" demonstrates our faith in God, even when events happen in our lives that we don't like very much. It means stepping out of the "here and now," and remember just who this God is that we serve and how powerful He is. If He can raise Jesus Christ from the dead, handling my cancer should be child's play for our God. Is it easy to believe that? No! We are back to "resiliency," aren't we? My faith in our God is becoming more resilient by giving thanks in all circumstances.

Happy Thanksgiving to all our families at St. John. Love you lots!  
Pastor Jim



**Due to Pr. Jim's absence this holiday season, Christmas Eve Candlelight service with Holy Communion on Dec. 24<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 p.m. will be conducted by Pr. John Ramsey and for those who wish to worship on Sunday, Dec 25<sup>th</sup>, you are invited to join members of Grace Lutheran as they celebrate Jesus' birth 9:00 a.m. at 9685 East River, Elyria. Both Pr. Ramsey and Pr. Weldon (Grace, Elyria) have been helping out at St. John's on Saturdays. In addition, Pr. Ramsey has been visiting the sick and shut-ins and conducting the Confirmation class.**

**Worship on Sat., Dec. 31 at 5:00 p.m. at St. John's will be conducted by Pr. John Ramsey and again, there will not be a service at St. John on Sun. Jan 1. Instead, members are invited to worship at Grace/Elyria at 9:00 a.m.**

