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## Higher Things Daily Devotions

This week (last week of July) I am with our youth at the Higher Things conference at Concordia University Texas in Austin. It will be a busy week for me. I am the catechist and as such I have a number of responsibilities and will be presenting three different topics and preaching at the opening service. I love the Higher Things organization and all it does for our youth (the youth also really love it) and so it is a joy and privilege to serve.

In addition to conferences, one of the products Higher Things offers is daily devotions. They are written with the youth in mind, yet they are certainly read and appreciated by more than young people. You may want to check them out. Daily devotions are a great way to be in the Word and keep you centered on the one thing needful. It was my privilege to write three weeks of devotions for them and they will be featured in the month of August. They are available at the following link and you can have them sent to your email inbox, read them online, or print them out in a booklet: <https://higherthings.org/reflections>

Below is the reflection I wrote for Monday August 16 on Luke 18:9-14, the parable of the tax collector and the Pharisee praying in the temple.

***“For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.” Luke 18:14***

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

The parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector illustrates the principle found throughout the Bible: **“God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”** [For example: Proverbs 29:23, Matthew 18:1-4, Luke 1:52, 14:11, James 4:6,10, 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 5:5-6.]

Jesus presents two characters we easily recognize. The first is the ultra-conservative, far right religious type. The Pharisees took their religious obligations seriously. They paid attention to the rules and strictly followed them. This group was formed by men who had seen too many of their fellow Jews sell out over the years and go along with whatever false gods and unholy practices their foreign invaders imposed on them.

The second character is the tax collector. These men worked for the foreign invaders against their fellow countrymen, collecting taxes from Jews for Romans. They were known to be extortionists. Using the muscle of the Roman soldiers, they could demand unreasonable rates and get it –often lining their own pockets in the process.

As Jesus begins the story of a Pharisee and a tax collector going to the temple to pray, most people would assume He was going to hold up the religious Pharisee and condemn the greedy tax collector. But Jesus does the opposite. He describes a Pharisee who only wants to tell God how good he is and a publican who knows and feels his guilt. And because of this, the contrite sinner is justified, while the arrogant prude is not.

As religiously serious people, (you’re reading a devotion after all!) we easily relate to the Pharisees. While their religious adherence was exemplary in many ways, the Pharisees could be self-righteous and unloving. This

particular Pharisee's problem was spiritual pride. He thought he was so good, he could justify himself and didn't need God's grace. The tax collector, on the other hand, knew his sin and knew he needed God's mercy.

The tax collector was an outcast of society. So, imagine someone today that is like him. The drug user? That creepy guy who's really into porn? The girl who sleeps around? The kids struggling with their gender identity or sexual orientation? You get the picture. Substitute them for the tax collector and you get the modern version of the story. The point is, even those who have made terrible choices, and have a life full of obvious sins, can humble themselves before God and receive His grace. But those who are spiritually proud will not receive the Savior, because they do not understand that they need saving.

Whether our lives more closely resemble the Pharisee or the Tax collector we get in trouble when we think too highly of ourselves. As Luke explains: We dare not trust in ourselves and treat others with contempt. The goal is to trust in Jesus (not in ourselves) and treat others with love and mercy, because in Jesus, God has so loved us. Sinners who look to Jesus are justified - and not just the really religious sinners, but even the really bad ones too. God's grace really is that amazing.

Name + of Jesus. Amen

*"Chief of sinners though I be, Jesus shed His blood for me. Died that I might live on high, Lives that I might never die. As the branch is to the vine, I am His and He is mine."* LSB 611:1

## Music Rehearsals to Resume in Fall

The Music program at Lord of Life exists to glorify God and provide an opportunity to use God's gift of music in worship.

Choir rehearsals will resume on Wednesday, September 8<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 P.M. The choir will lead in musical worship two to three times per month, and all are welcome.

Perhaps you would like to sing in a choir, but find it difficult to commit to weekly rehearsals. Over this last year, small groups participated in worship with music that required less rehearsal time but still contributed to the worship service. If this interests you, please let Vicki know.

Hand bell choir will also begin to gather this fall. Please contact Vicki to let her know if you are interested in playing. This includes returning ringers as well as anyone new to bells.

Also if you have any questions, Vicki can be reached at [vicki@planolutheran.com](mailto:vicki@planolutheran.com) or just talk to her on Sunday morning.



## Lord of Life Small Groups

### EMPTY NESTERS' CARE GROUP

- † For info contact Mike and Sandra Paradise at (972) 424-2951 or [itsparadise.inplano@verizon.net](mailto:itsparadise.inplano@verizon.net)
- † Usually meet one Sat. a month at 2:30 PM

### EPIC PARENTING

- † For 30ish couples with kids
- † For info contact Ben Scarth [BenjaminScarth@yahoo.com](mailto:BenjaminScarth@yahoo.com)
- † Usually meet one Sunday a month in the afternoon or evening

### FRUITS OF THE VINE CARE GROUP

- † For info contact Scott Peters at 972-898-3351 cell or [speters@planolutheran.com](mailto:speters@planolutheran.com)
- † Usually meet one Sun. a month at 5:30 PM

### GOOD NEWS CARE GROUP

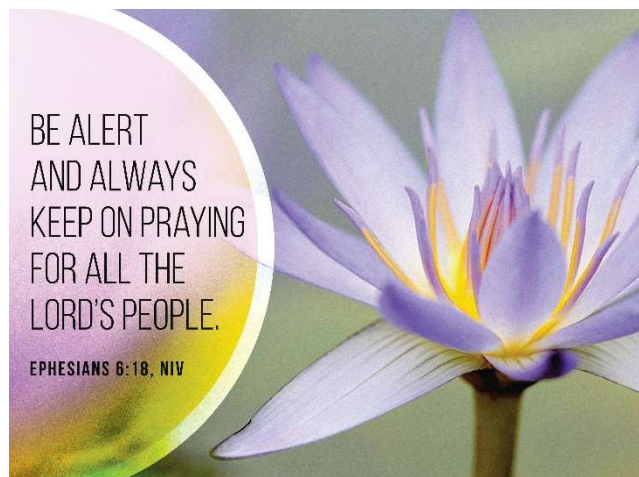
- † For info contact Chris Oltmann at (972) 727-6330 or Mike Kunschke at (847) 951-6974
- † Usually meet the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sat. of each month at 6:30 PM for Bible study

### MIXED BLESSINGS

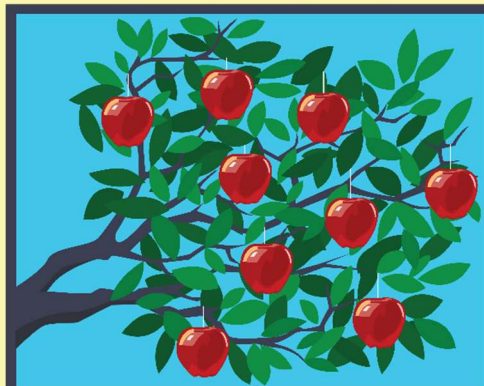
- † For info contact Fred and Ruth Bernhardt at (972) 398-0771
- † Will meet Sat. 8/14 at 6:30 PM

### TWENTY SOMETHINGS

- † For couples and singles in their twenties
- † For info contact Pastor Shaltanis at [PastorShaltanis@yahoo.com](mailto:PastorShaltanis@yahoo.com)
- † The group is currently in transition, but has usually met on Sundays after late service



## AUGUST



## BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

- 1 Brian & Devrie Hahn (41)
- 2 Travis Bennett
- 2 Debbie Olsen
- 2 Leo Parrent
- 2 Carol Read
- 3 Shannon Nuschler
- 4 Doug & Kathy Hite (20)
- 5 Sherri Kunschke
- 5 Jeff & Kara Prescott (26)
- 6 Cathleen Ott
- 7 Scott Peters
- 8 Trent & Jackie Barnes (6)
- 8 Tony & Nevelle Vess (62)
- 10 Jim Hampton
- 12 Carol Ozlowski
- 13 Earl Lund
- 13 Rachel Ozlowski
- 14 Dixie Hacker
- 14 Phaedra Shaltanis
- 16 Robert Duff
- 16 Mike Paradise
- 16 Audrey Thiel
- 17 Duffy & Cindy Carter (25)
- 17 Tim & Carol Ozlowski (30)
- 18 Josephine Barnes
- 18 Christine Messinger
- 18 Kevin Tyler
- 22 Matt & Sarah Sims (23)
- 23 Jessica Reeves
- 25 Brian & Gail Wolf (42)
- 28 Joanne Benner
- 28 Braydon LaPlante
- 28 Bill & Charis Bennett (44)
- 30 Doug Hite
- 30 Tom Read



**DEADLINE FOR NEWSLETTER ARTICLES IS THE 20th — [lol.newsletter.editor@gmail.com](mailto:lol.newsletter.editor@gmail.com)**