Dear DGCC Family,

Grace and peace to you this day. As many of you know, Covid had me a bit down and out this week, but I’m on the mend. Thanks to all for your concern and prayers. Since I didn’t get to the Words of Encouragement for this week, please enjoy these “reruns” from a year ago. We will pick up next week with the second part of the prophet Isaiah.

Blessings to you all.

Pastor Lou

**Words of Encouragement**

**Week of June 28, 2021**

**June 28**

Dear DGCC Family,

Grace and peace to you this day.

As I write these devotionals, Judy and I are getting ready to head out on vacation. I’m actually writing these a week in advance so that I am not writing them while “on the road.”

Our first stop will be Cleveland and the Rock N Roll Hall of Fame, then on to Niagara Falls, Cooperstown, NY and the Baseball Hall of Fame (I believe Judy will be visiting a spa!), then a swing south to Hamden, CT for dinner with our son Matt and worship at his church the next morning, and then a final stop in the Poconos before heading home. Aside from a few weekends away, this will be the first vacation Judy and I have taken just the two of us in something like thirty years.

One of the things I am not very good at (among many) is allowing myself to sit back and have some R&R. As I think about it, I know that this is not what God intends. While He certainly does expect our dedication and service, He also expects that we take the time to rest and refresh from time-to-time. In fact, He Himself did so:

“By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done” (Genesis 2:2).

As I ponder this, I notice at least two things. First, God’s rest came after a period of work. The Hebrew word used here for “work” is melakah, a closer translation of which is occupation, or business. In other words, God was not just engaged in some idle past time or some busy work. He was engaged in the business of the divine, that is, Creation.
The other thing I notice here is that God ordains the time of rest as “holy.” This means that taking time to rest is ordained and blessed by the Almighty.

So, my prayer for you today is this: take the time to rest, refresh, and recharge. And allow the Lord of all Creation to ordain it as holy.

IHS,
Pastor Lou

June 29

My Dear Friends,
Blessings to you this day.

As you read this, Judy and I are on the final leg of our trip and are headed home. I will admit that it’s a bit odd to be writing these words in advance and talking about events that have not yet occurred. Sort of a “Back to the Future” experience.

In any case, as I continue to reflect on the need for rest, I also ponder the human need to get out there and explore. To hit the road, as it were, and explore the world around us. While animals may migrate, only humans travel. Of course, animals migrate for a purpose: to find a more hospitable climate, a nesting or spawning area, or a more ready food supply. But only humans travel for its own sake. I think that might be because God created us to travel, not necessarily to Cleveland or Niagara Falls, but through this life on planet earth until we reach our final destination. The psalmist said it like this:

“I am a sojourner on the earth; hide not your commandments from me!” (Psalm 119:19).

In the Jewish tradition, a “sojourner” was a stranger wandering through unknown, foreign territory. After Moses killed the Egyptian slave driver and fled to Midian, he described his experience there like this: “I am a stranger in a strange land” (Exodus 2:22).

All of us are travelers; sojourners if you will, strangers just passing through this earthly existence until that glorious day when we arrive home and are embraced by our Maker. And so, my prayer for you today as you travel your worldly trip is that you do so with joy, and with purpose, knowing that at the end of the road is your wonderful, awesome, eternal home.

IHS,
Pastor Lou
June 30
My Brothers and Sisters,

Grace and peace to you today in the name of Jesus the Messiah.

Wow, today is the last day of June! Summer is at its peak and it’s hard to believe that the 4th of July is around the corner.

Also around the corner are two milestones in the Bury family: On July 3, our son will turn 30, and on July 9, our daughter will turn 21. That is so very, very hard to believe.

I know it sounds cliché, but it seems like yesterday that that on the 4th of July thirty years ago, we got a very unexpected call from our adoption agency, Bethany Christian Services, that a little boy had been born the day before at Ingalls Hospital in Blue Island and if everything worked out, we should be prepared to bring him home that weekend. To put that in perspective, 4th of July that year was on a Thursday. Three days later, a young birth Mom was handing over her baby to that baby’s new Mom. I can assure you, there was not a dry eye in the house.

Fast forward almost ten years, and many fits and starts later. The scene was both different but similar. This time we were not on the south side of Chicago, but the south side of China, in a city called Fuzhou in Fujian province. We had travelled for 48 hours on the clock (having crossed the international date line) and were huddled in a hotel room with seven other families and our representative from the adoption agency. We were told that the babies would be coming shortly. Soon enough, we heard the first baby crying from down the hall. Jillian had arrived and, like her new brother, was placed in her new Mommy’s arms.

And now those two babies, who God knew from the beginning would find their way to Judy and me to complete our family, are wonderful, Godly adults in their own right. But my goodness, where did the time go? I have a friend whose parents are from Ireland. His mother has a saying that goes like this: “The days are long, but the years are short.” I think that’s about right, but I prefer what the writer of Ecclesiastes says: “He has made everything beautiful in its time” (3:11).

And so, my prayer for you today is this: It’s OK to look back, and it’s OK to look forward, but don’t forget about the present. We cannot change the past and we are not
promised the future. So, take a moment and enjoy God’s blessing of the here and now, for **this** is the day He has made. Rejoice, and be glad.

IHS,
Pastor Lou

**July 1**

Happy July, everyone! As I write this, it is 89 degrees outside, the humidity is 85%, and I am very thankful for my nice, cool, air-conditioned office.

While I am not a fan of the heat, nonetheless, now that the summer solstice has passed, the process of the days getting longer is reversing itself and the days are now gradually getting shorter as the summer season hurries through the northern half of the northern hemisphere. I must say that as I get older, even though I am a “fall and winter” kind of guy, I am no longer in a hurry for the days and seasons to pass. Alas, however, pass they will. And that’s ok.

Whenever I think about the passing of time, and the coming and going of the seasons, I am, of course, drawn to the famous passage from Ecclesiastes that goes like this:

There is a time for everything,
and a season for every activity under the heavens:
   a time to be born and a time to die,
   a time to plant and a time to uproot,
   a time to kill and a time to heal,
   a time to tear down and a time to build,
   a time to weep and a time to laugh,
   a time to mourn and a time to dance,
   a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,
   a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,
   a time to search and a time to give up,
   a time to keep and a time to throw away,
   a time to tear and a time to mend,
   a time to be silent and a time to speak,
   a time to love and a time to hate,
   a time for war and a time for peace (3:1-8).

The writer of Ecclesiastes, who is otherwise a rather dour fellow, is saying this: The seasons of nature, just like the seasons of life, are appointed and ordained by God. That is what he means by the phrase “under the heavens.” God, in His sovereignty, has appointed the time, or “season.” Foer everything. And, while I may wish for the days and the seasons to last just a bit longer, I find comfort and peace in the belief that the God
who cast the stars in their appointed places also has cast my days and seasons before me.

My prayer for you today is this: whatever the season of life you’re in, bask in the brightest sunshine in all of Creation: that which is found in the steadfast love of God for His people. Today, here and now, let the “Sonshine” warm your spirit and comfort your soul.

IHS,
Pastor Lou
July 2

Happy Friday, everyone!

As before, today will be a musical devotional.

Yesterday we read the famous passage from Ecclesiastes about the seasons. Today, let’s hear it from the Byrds. Turn up the volume and enjoy.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CHuAmsEGdGU

IHS,
Pastor Lou