August 22

Happy Monday, everyone.

Well, the “BIG DAY” has come and gone. Our daughter is now a married woman and life is returning to normal.

I’m glad to say that for the most part, I was able to hold it together. No blubbering as I walked her up the aisle (though I came close when I realized the song being played was “You Are My Sunshine,” which Judy and I used to sing to her at bedtime when she was a little girl.) No choking back tears during my brief remarks and prayer of blessing before dinner. No crying during the Daddy-Daughter dance (“My Wish” by Rascal Flatts).

That’s not to say that there was no emotion. In the weeks prior, especially when I was alone, it didn’t take much for me to turn into a mild basket case. A glimpse of a picture when she was a little girl, a fleeting memory, or the sound of her voice as Judy and she discussed wedding plans was all it took to fill my eyes with tears.

What helped on the day of the wedding was a relatively new tradition called “the first look.” Rather than seeing her for the first time in her dress when the time came to walk her up the aisle, our son Matt and I were led to a spot outside and were told to turn our backs. Jillian then walked up behind us and tapped us on the shoulder, which meant we were to turn around and see her in her dress for the first time. For me, that brought a jolt of emotion and a flood of memories. But, by the time it came a few minutes later for her to take my arm, the rawness of the emotion had passed.

As I think about that, I am reminded that all of us will one day get a “first look.” That glorious day when we will see our Savior face to face. This is how John the Elder describes it in the book of Revelation:

“Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads” (22:1-4).

That day will come when we will behold Him in all His majesty, when we will loo into His loving and compassionate eyes, and He will welcome us home with open arms. And on that day, our “first look” will not just be a passing moment consigned to memory, but a look that will last through eternity.

IHS,
Pastor Lou

August 23
Greetings, DGCC Family.

There are several retention ponds near our house, most of which are pretty unremarkable, except for one. It is surrounded by beautiful flowers and looks like this:

![Retention pond with flowers](image)

The flowers are starting to fade a bit as summer begins its annual exit, but I think you get the idea. I’m no gardener, so I don’t know what they are, but every time I drive by them (which is almost daily), I am thankful for this splash of beauty and color in an otherwise unremarkable and somewhat mundane drive.

Retention ponds serve a useful purpose. The catch rainwater runoff that otherwise might flood our streets or basements, and most are not much more than a small and lackluster body of water sitting among the suburban landscape. But this one is different. Aside from the flowers, there are often ducks and geese that call it home, along with a pair of great white heron wading in the shallows looking for an errant minnow.

As I drive by, I am reminded that God gifts us by making the commonplace beautiful and the ordinary extraordinary. This is what the writer of Ecclesiastes says:

“He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end” (3:11).

The Lord of Creation makes all things beautiful in His time. At the same time, He gives us the beautiful gift of eternity with Him: “He has also set eternity in the human heart.” That is the most beautiful gift of all, given to us freely out of the grace shown in the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.
And so, my prayer for you today is this: see the beauty in the everyday, and then remember that the same Creator who brought that beauty to your eye also has brought eternity to your heart.

IHS, Pastor Lou

**August 24**

Grace and peace to you this day.

Normally at about this time of the year, I’m anxious for summer to end and autumn to be on its way. The changing leaves, cool crisp evenings, a good bowl of hot, home-made soup. Usually at this time of the year I feel like most of you do in February: done with winter. Burt for me, I’m done with summer.

But, whether I wish it or not, it most surely will come to an end. For me, the first sign of the summer turning into fall is when the acorns start to fall from the oak tree in our front yard, which started this past Saturday. They are now starting to litter our lawn and the street:
They crunch under our tires and the local squirrel population loves them (maybe now they’ll stay off my bird feeder). In any case, this is a sure sign that fall is on the way.

All of that being said, I find comfort knowing that the God of Creation is also the God of the Seasons, and that He is in control. This is what the psalmist said:

“In his hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to him. The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land” (95:4-5).

And those same hands that hold the very depths of the earth uphold us as well. This is how the prophet Isaiah describes it:

“Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand” (41:10).

So, let’s make sure to savor the last weeks of summer, knowing that God is in control and has a purpose in all things. And as the seasons of nature come and go, as do the seasons of our lives, rest in the assurance that the same hand who holds creation also very tenderly, and gently, and with infinite care, holds our hand as well.

IHS,
Pastor Lou

August 25
Greetings to you with the Shalom of the Savior.

This past week I resumed my morning routine of taking our big dog for an early morning walk. We like to walk in a park near our house that partly runs along the DuPage River. Here’s the scene from Thursday morning:
As we walked along early in the morning, nature seemed busy at work. There were ducks paddling in the water, birds were chirping, a robin was grabbing a bug off the ground, squirrels were scurrying about, and rabbits sat in the dewy grass munching their on their morning breakfast.

As we walked along, and we came across a grove of flowers with bees searching for nectar and at the same time gathering pollen. I stood there for a few long minutes just marveling at the complexity of the simple honeybee, its important role in the circle of life, and how, like us, it too relies on the hand of God for its daily sustenance. As I stood there, I was once again reminded of the words of the psalmist:

“All creatures look to you
to give them their food at the proper time.
When you give it to them,
they gather it up;
when you open your hand,
they are satisfied with good things” (104:27-28).

The hand of God holds the depths of the earth. The righteous hand of God upholds His children. And the open hand of God provides us with “good things.”

My prayer for you today is that you experience the hand of God. The hand that upholds you. The hand that provides you with all good things. And the hand that one day will beckon you home.

IHS,
Pastor Lou

August 26
Happy Friday, everyone.
Here’s your musical devotional for today. Turn up the volume and enjoy!
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dq6E_D20538

IHS,
Pastor Lou