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BETHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH

ELKHORN, NEBRASKA

MAY 22, 2005

PASTOR WENDA FRY

1 PASTOR WENDA FRY: This weekend we finished the  
2 fifty day spiritual adventure that we began on Easter  
3 Sunday.

4 That was fifty days ago and we are going to finish  
5 well this morning by talking about the precious gift of life  
6 that we have in Christ Jesus our Lord.

7 We have been asking God for the last fifty days to  
8 take the scales away from our eyes and to sharpen our  
9 spiritual eyesight so that we can see God's presence in our  
10 church, and in our homes, and in our lives, and in our  
11 places of work.

12 We have been asking God to sharpen our spiritual  
13 eyesight.

14 We began this adventure by imagining were Christ to  
15 be bodily present in our sanctuary, how would that change  
16 what we do?

17 Would it change how we sing? Would it change what  
18 we put in the offering plate?

19 We began to think about that and hopefully you have  
20 picked up a new spiritual habit.

21 That was our hope and our prayer; that you would so  
22 notice God's presence in your life it would begin to  
23 transform the way you talk to others, the things that you  
24 do.

25 Maybe you've developed a spiritual habit of

1 preparing yourself for worship. That was a suggestion.

2 Maybe you have developed a spiritual habit of more  
3 often random acts of kindness than you used to do.

4 Maybe you have been asking God to put people in  
5 your path so that you can introduce Jesus Christ, your  
6 Savior, to others.

7 I'm hoping that you have picked up at least one new  
8 spiritual habit on this fifty day spiritual adventure,  
9 because we have been praying for you, that your spiritual  
10 eyesight would be keen and it would be sharpened.

11 Today we are going to talk about as we practice the  
12 presence of Christ we experience life at its very best.

13 And the letter from Paul to the Ephesians is a  
14 great way to begin.

15 But I want to start with a question I have for you  
16 to ponder.

17 Have you ever looked for a book, or a CD, or a tool  
18 maybe in your garage, or a food item in your pantry, and  
19 just thought to yourself I know it's in here, I know I  
20 bought that, only to find yourself, after going to the store  
21 and purchasing yet another one, coming back and finding that  
22 item?

23 Has that happened to any one of you? It's so  
24 frustrating, isn't it?

25 With Adrian's graduation today I was doing quite a

1 bit of preparation in the home this past week and I now have  
2 more TSP, that's that heavy duty cleanser that you wash wood  
3 with before you paint, I now have more of that, more plastic  
4 garbage bags and more barbecue sauce than I could ever use  
5 before Christ comes again.

6 (Laughter)

7 It's so frustrating, isn't it, when you go out and  
8 you buy something and you already possess it.

9 In the letter to the Ephesians Paul wants the  
10 believers at Ephesus to realize what they already possess.  
11 That's what his intent is.

12 So we are going to look at that scripture today and  
13 before we do I want to share this introduction to this past  
14 week from the fifty day spiritual adventure.

15 "Life is good when people are confident that they  
16 are loved. Even when things go wrong these people feel  
17 secure, because they know they are not alone.

18 "In his letter to the Ephesian church Paul pushes  
19 this sense of being loved to the ultimate.

20 "He wants this congregation to grasp just how wide  
21 and long and high and deep is the great love of Christ.

22 "The truth is, no better life is possible than that  
23 which Jesus offers his followers.

24 "Through the centuries Christians have known their  
25 share of pain and heartache, both good and bad, but they





1 matter, and I had a funeral on Thursday and one on Friday,  
2 and I was mad about that, I was mad at death, because death  
3 is such an intruder, not only in my life, but in the life of  
4 those two families.

5           Death had made its way, plowed like a bulldozer its  
6 way through, and I hate that.

7           I absolutely hate how death intrudes in our life,  
8 on all counts, and the only hope that I had, the only thing  
9 I could hold fast to is the fact that God hates death more  
10 than I do.

11           That was the only thing that could keep me going  
12 and I asked the Lord about it all week.

13           And when I was coming away from the hearse to  
14 putting the casket in on Friday, I walked outside and around  
15 to my office, and it was a beautiful day and the wind was  
16 just, it's just luck, it was just caressing my face really.

17           And it was clear to me in that moment. God said,  
18 "Do you understand? Do you understand now?"

19           And I said, "Yes, I do."

20           And he said, "I want you to tell the people that."

21           And I said, "Okay."

22           Because what he was trying to tell me, and what he  
23 wanted me to share with you, is that he didn't know if I was  
24 going to hear it this week, so I think this is what  
25 happened.

1           Life is precious. Life. Our life together in  
2 Christ Jesus is precious.

3           When we have a moment with our baby, it's precious.  
4 When we have a moment with our contractor in the kitchen and  
5 we are just talking back and forth, it's life; it's not  
6 getting something done.

7           We have this life together that is so precious and  
8 we have everything we need as God's precious children.

9           We have everything we need, we already have, what  
10 we possess, in order to live a full life in Christ Jesus.

11           And that's what Paul wants to tell the believers at  
12 Ephesus; you already possess everything you need to live a  
13 full live in Christ.

14           Let's go to the scripture and I want to point out  
15 some things today for you.

16           First of all, it's on page 184, Ephesians,  
17 Chapter 1.

18           The first thing that Paul wants the believers to  
19 grasp, to hold on to, to cling to, is the fact that we  
20 experience life at its best when we grasp the hope. When we  
21 hold on to that.

22           Verse 15. "I have heard of your faith in the Lord  
23 Jesus and your love toward all the saints."

24           Paul has not met them yet, he's writing, but isn't  
25 this awesome? He has heard about that.

1           It kind of reminds me of you guys. I would write  
2 the same thing. I have heard of your faith.

3           He loves the believers at Ephesus, because he has  
4 heard about their faith, and he has heard about their loving  
5 and caring ways.

6           And I would say the same thing about the people  
7 here at Bethany.

8           And that's why he wants to give thanks to God, so  
9 his prayer is beautiful.

10           Verse 17, "I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus  
11 Christ may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you  
12 come to know him."

13           You could put that into a graduation card today, if  
14 you don't know what to write.

15           That is beautiful. There is your graduation  
16 message right there.

17           I pray that you may know what is the hope to which  
18 He has called you.

19           "So that with the eyes of your heart enlightened  
20 you may know what is the hope to which you have been  
21 called."

22           Flip back over, Ephesians 1, Verse 4, that's the  
23 hope. We have been chosen. Verse 4 says just as he chose  
24 you.

25           Our hope is that we are precious, and we possess

1 everything we need for a full and beautiful life in Christ  
2 Jesus.

3 That is the hope; the fact that we have been chosen  
4 and we are holy and blameless, as the rest of that verse  
5 says.

6 And then on to the riches of his glorious  
7 inheritance among the saints.

8 We need to grasp the inheritance; the treasures  
9 that are ours for the taking.

10 So often I think we live as though we are not that  
11 precious, but we are.

12 Isaiah 43, "You are precious and honored in my  
13 sight."

14 We forget that we are daughters and sons of the  
15 King.

16 We forget that we are really special in Christ  
17 Jesus and to God.

18 We often don't live as though we have inherited  
19 anything, and we need to.

20 We need to live, we need to grasp and hold on to  
21 the inheritance which is ours in Christ Jesus.

22 We have riches, and look at Verse 3 of Ephesians 1.  
23 This is how rich we are.

24 "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus  
25 Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual

1 blessing."

2 I love this passage today. Because we have an  
3 inheritance. We have everything we need.

4 I'm going to say it many times over today. We have  
5 everything we need.

6 We already possess it, but we often live as though  
7 we don't possess anything that is to be treasured.

8 God's treasure chest of grace and love and  
9 forgiveness is ours to run our fingers through, daughters  
10 and sons of the King.

11 We are princes and princesses. We have been given  
12 an inheritance and it gives God great joy when it says there  
13 riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints.

14 It gives God great joy to use us to spread his love  
15 and his wealth and his riches. He want to use us. It gives  
16 him great joy.

17 Verse 19, he also wants us to grasp the greatness  
18 of his power for us who believe according to the working of  
19 his great power.

20 That word immeasurable, if you have your own Bible  
21 highlight that, circle that.

22 Immeasurable means to throw over or beyond. That's  
23 the root word for that.

24 So what if we read it like that, and what is the  
25 greatness that is thrown over or beyond you?



1           Like Pastor Mark taught us a few weeks ago, this  
2 whole life we have is physical.

3           So we are looking around for the presence of Christ  
4 and while we are practicing it, the more we do it, the more  
5 we get used to the fact that he's right here with us,  
6 speaking to us, sitting next to us, breathing his life in  
7 us.

8           We have got to claim it, princes and princesses, we  
9 have to claim it.

10           We are sons and daughters of the King. We have  
11 this rich, beautiful inheritance and we have the power to  
12 believe.

13           And that power enables us to defeat our spiritual  
14 enemies.

15           Do you know what I'm talking about there? The old  
16 Adam and Eve that tap you on the shoulder and say, "You  
17 don't really believe that, do you?"

18           Often the old Adam and Eve will get us just when we  
19 are coming up to communion, try to get us to look at other  
20 people instead of think about the glorious riches of the  
21 forgiveness, always trying to bother us and pull us away  
22 from what we believe.

23           "You don't really believe that little white wafer  
24 and little dip in that wine or white grape juice is going to  
25 forgive your fat sins, do you?"

1 "Yes, I do."

2 But he's always working, evil is always working  
3 against us.

4 That's why we've got to claim the power, and we  
5 have to ask God to fill us with your power, then we can  
6 throw over and beyond whatever it is that God is asking us  
7 to do.

8 We can do it because of his power at work in us.  
9 It enables us to endure suffering.

10 If we have asked for that power we are able to  
11 endure suffering, we are able to defeat our spiritual  
12 enemies, and we are able to witness, we are able to tell  
13 others.

14 We are able to, like we talked last week, to  
15 introduce him to others.

16 At this time I want, Michelle, my darling, would  
17 you come up here?

18 And I have asked Michelle to speak to us. She  
19 wrote me an email that said that she would like to share a  
20 story with her church family about the power of God at work  
21 in her in LaPaz.

22 I said, "That will be excellent, because that will  
23 fit in this week perfectly."

24 MICHELLE: Thanks. I know that you have all heard  
25 so much about what goes on in LaPaz and the situation with

1 the street children and what we do.

2 I want to share a story of how God has been working  
3 in my life and showing me how powerful he is.

4 One of the hardest things that we do, one of the  
5 hardest part of my job is when I have to go to the streets  
6 to find a kid who has left the streets and has returned.

7 Because just like that, that face, how happy are  
8 the faces of the kids in the home, I get to see them like  
9 that and then they go back to the streets.

10 And so one night we went to look for a kid who had  
11 been off the streets, working, doing really well.

12 And John had been out there for a couple hours  
13 looking for him and I came and joined him.

14 And we always say that it is an impossible task to  
15 find a kid in LaPaz, because there's a million people,  
16 literally, and we are looking for a moving target and we are  
17 a moving target.

18 So it's only by divine intervention that you are  
19 ever going to meet.

20 So we always pray that God will guide our feet,  
21 guide our eyes, show us where this kid is.

22 We had been looking for four hours and you know  
23 what?

24 My feet were tired, and my legs were tired, I was  
25 physically exhausted, but I was spiritually exhausted.



1 thought that's what I'm talking about.

2 And I went up to this kid and he was just  
3 completely high, he barely even recognized us, a kid who is  
4 like a son to us, he barely even recognized us.

5 And he didn't want to see us and we sat down and we  
6 talked to him and he just said, "I'm alone, I don't have  
7 anybody, and just leave me alone."

8 And after an hour he just pushed us away and he ran  
9 away and John ran after him for a few blocks and he had to  
10 leave him.

11 And I just started to cry. I said, "God, I don't  
12 get you, you know, I don't get it."

13 But because he had shown me that miracle I was able  
14 to say, "You know what? It doesn't matter if I'm at this  
15 kid's side. I know that when a kid is depressed like that  
16 and high he'll probably go cut himself. He probably will be  
17 unsafe, he will probably be thinking that his life is over."

18 And I said, "You know what, God? I see now. You  
19 have the power to be with him and I don't have to be at his  
20 side. You are going to take care of him and I believe  
21 that."

22 And had I not had that prayer and had that moment  
23 that would have been it.

24 And he must have known that, he really must have  
25 known that, that would have been it, that would have been it

1 for my faith, I admit it.

2 And I went home and I started putting on my pajamas  
3 and I thought, you know, God is winning this fight, it's  
4 going to be okay, he's got the power, it's going to be okay.

5 Half an hour later my phone rang and here was this  
6 kid, finally came down off of his high, and didn't even know  
7 where he was, let alone didn't know he had even seen us, and  
8 he was scared, and he said, "I want to come home."

9 I said, "All right. I'll be there a minute in a  
10 minute."

11 And I really saw God's power that day and I want to  
12 share that with you.

13 (Applause)

14 PASTOR FRY: Thank you so much. In Michelle's  
15 email that she wrote to me she said, "I have truly begun to  
16 understand just how powerful, loving, compassionate and  
17 merciful is our God."

18 And that is key to experiencing life at its best,  
19 isn't it?

20 To know with certainty, not in every moment of our  
21 day, as Michelle attested to, but to know with certainty how  
22 merciful and powerful and all loving our God is.

23 And as we close today, Verses 20 and 21, there is a  
24 list in there about the magnificence of our God.

25 And it was actually an early church hymn, but God

1 put the power to work in Christ when he raised Him from the  
2 dead, that is our Easter faith.

3 And now He sits at the right hand, Verse 21, far  
4 above all rule and authority and power and dominion and  
5 above every name that has ever been named.

6 In other words past, present, or future. And he  
7 has put all things under his feet, Verse 22, and has made  
8 Him the head over all things. All things.

9 All things. Remodeling. New jobs. Struggles in  
10 marriages.

11 God has made Christ the head over all things, in  
12 the fullness of him who fills all in all.

13 Almost we would miss that very last little phrase,  
14 but that there shows us the magnificence of our God, and the  
15 mighty power that we have in Him.

16 And there is the promise; that He fills everyone  
17 and every thing, and we need to claim that, sons and  
18 daughters of the King, princes and princesses.

19 We need to hold fast to that hope. We need to hold  
20 fast and run our fingers through the treasures and through  
21 the glorious inheritance which is ours.

22 We need to appropriate his power and claim every  
23 day the magnificence of our Savior.

24 Let's pray together. God, you are holy and  
25 awesome. We sometimes forget just how powerful and

1 magnificent you are.

2           This world and its suffering is not too big for  
3 you.

4           And our problems, our grief, our despair, our  
5 temptations, they are not too big for you to handle.

6           For you teach us in your word today that we have  
7 everything in you.

8           You are all in all and we pray today that you would  
9 help us to claim our inheritance; to live as precious  
10 children of God, so that we can share that inheritance with  
11 this world that you came to save.

12           Bless us, and thank you for this fifty day  
13 spiritual adventure. In Jesus's name. Amen.

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