

Bishop Gerhard Preibisch

*O give thanks to the LORD, call on his name,
make known his deeds among the peoples.
1 Chron 16:8 (NRSV)*

I recall listening to a CBC radio broadcast in which an author was interviewed who wrote a book on happiness. The author claimed that his research demonstrated that people of faith tend to be happier than people with no religious beliefs. I hope he did not spend too much time researching why people of faith tend to be happier. He could have simply asked the members of any congregation in the ELCIC .

I believe we are happier because we believe that there is someone besides ourselves who is watching over us. We know that our future is secure in God. We also are happier because we belong to a community of faith in which people support one another with their presence and their prayers.

People often ask me: “How do you cope with the demands and stress of your job?” The answer is quite simple – it is the prayers of the people . Wherever I go, people assure me that they are praying for me. Their prayers are a tremendous source of encouragement.

Prayers are important not only for bishops and pastors but for all of God’s people. Many times a person of faith has confided in me how the prayers of their faith community were a tremendous strength to them during an illness or other difficult and challenging times .

Our happiness, however, should not be confused with naivety. We are all very aware that we are confronted with the same challenges, stresses and illnesses as anyone else. We are not without worry. For example: daily I worry and pray for our children, our granddaughter, our friends, our synod – and the members of the church.

Worry is natural but it does not need to lead us to despair. When worry threatens to engulf us, it is good that we can turn to God in prayer. God, who is faithful, hears our prayers and assures us that we are not left alone to cope with the challenges of life.

That God cares for us and all of creation is evident in the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the son of God! In the third chapter of the Gospel of John we read: *“Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.* (John 3:17)

All around us there is evidence of how God cares for us and all of creation. Look, Jesus says, how God provides even for flowers to bloom in their season and for birds to fly south for the winter. Observe the wonders of creation and know that God – who has counted even the number of hair on our heads – watches over us!

Not only are we cared for, God has created and equipped us to be an integral part of the created order. We have been chosen to be God’s co-workers to manage and maintain the creation. Perhaps this is the true source of our happiness, knowing that each one of us has a purpose.

We are called to proclaim, live and share the good news of God in Jesus Christ. Surely this also means caring for God’s creation and for those with whom we share this creation.

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