



Welcome to Redeemer Lutheran School and the 2010-2011 school year. What a joy it is to be partners in this awesome ministry to share Jesus in the lives of our students!

This year our theme is **“Lighten Up,”** based on the words of Jesus from Matthew 5: 16. *“In the same way, let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good deeds, and praise your Father in heaven.”*

I was a very serious child. I took everything to heart and worked hard to please everyone. I think, looking back, that I thought God would love me more if I did everything right...and yes, that He would love me less when I blew it. So I spent most of my day trying to make others happy with me, trying to reach “perfection.” Funny thing though, I was always stressed out. I had a knot in my stomach from the time I was old enough to go to school. One day, after a particularly tough day, I climbed up on my grandma’s lap (What a wonderful place of peace and safety that was!), and I told her that I was a loser. (I was about 9.) She pulled me close and said, “Oh, honey, you need to lighten up. You need to relax and live in the joy of Jesus.” I didn’t understand what she meant and told her so. She smiled gently and responded, “Sweetie, God loves you...just the way you are. He doesn’t love you better on your good days or less on your bad ones. He loves you because you are His child.” I looked at my grandma to see if she was just saying that to make me feel better. Her eyes were shining brightly and suddenly I understood. I felt a huge weight lift. God loved me...ME! Grandma and I talked more about what living in the joy of Jesus meant. “Loving Jesus and living in His light...well, it radiates from you. People see Jesus...in you, and it brings light-His light-into the world. Remember when you helped Mr. B. rake his lawn? He wanted to pay you but you just smiled at him and told him you were doing what Jesus would want you to do.” I smiled, lost in that memory. Grandma went on to say, “When you help others without wanting anything in return, when you love someone without expecting them to love you in return, when you forgive someone even when they hurt you, when you tell someone about Jesus without worrying that they will not like you, that’s when you shine His light into the world.” I snuggled closer to my grandma’s heart, “Thanks, Grandma,” I whispered. “I think I understand.” That conversation has stayed with me all of these years. I have learned (and yes, I still fail) to relax, to “lighten up,” to bask in the joy of Jesus without worrying so much about that perfection I was so desperately seeking. God wants us to be “lights” in this world. When we “lighten up” in Him, these good works we do, we do for Him, not for us and for our reputation.

Deborah, a judge in the Old Testament, was called to be a light during a time when spiritual darkness covered the land. She rose to the call, took a stand for truth, and stayed faithful even in the face of an intimidating enemy. God used this woman’s life to redirect an entire nation’s steps. Previously the people were stumbling around in the darkness of their own poor choices, straining to walk in their own ways, and measuring their behavior by their neighbors’ behavior. They definitely needed a well-lit path; they needed the “light.” Then Deborah, who gathered brilliance in God’s presence, became His light-holder and His light-bearer-and she did it with grace and strength. “Shining is the real job of believing or teaching, by which we also helps others to know Jesus.”

So “lighten up!”

Live in the joy of Jesus!

Shine on!