

Laurie's Message for Friday May 22, 2020

Hello Apostles Family and Friends!

Happy Friday and the beginning of Memorial Day weekend. It seems like Memorial Day falls a bit early this year, but then I have to admit that the days, weeks and months have tended to blur together a bit since our routines have been altered by closures and Stay at Home Orders to reduce the spread of COVID 19. Just as so many lives were lost during wars and conflicts across the world, so many lives have been lost to COVID 19 across the world. I continue to pray that we have learned something from the devastations from both past wars and pandemics and that we use this information wisely to shape our future.

On a brighter note, I want to share with you today a lighthearted personal saga that began in March. Bert and I have adopted the use of a round table in our sunroom as our makeshift "office". The table is placed in the corner of the room, and from my seat at the table, I have clear vision out of three windows and a sliding glass door. I love the sunlight that streams through the windows into the room, I love seeing the trees blowing in the wind, I love watching the rabbits, the squirrels and the birds playing, and I love to hear the sounds of nature and the birds singing. These can also be distractions of course if I am trying to work on my computer, but now that I am retired, I have learned to welcome these types distractions on most days. Recently, I have found that I spend more and more time just looking out the windows and the sliding glass door at the trees. Mainly to see if any of my new **friends** are around.

We often have squirrels in our yard, chasing each other in our trees, hunting or hiding nuts and even climbing on our deck and looking in our windows just to tease our cats. But in early March, I noticed a large blue jay in one of the pine trees at the edge of our back yard. I don't ever recall seeing a blue jay in one of our trees before (we have lived here for 14 years). And, I have never seen one that large in my life! Soon thereafter, I noticed a smaller blue jay and a female cardinal in a tree, and a few days after that I noticed the female and a male cardinal among the branches! I was elated to see two blue jays and two cardinals in our trees! I thought this must surely be a sign! Aren't these birds symbolic? Who is thinking of me or visiting me, and what is the message?

The weeks following my first sighting of the birds were remarkably busy with commitments and I soon forgot about looking to see if the blue jays and cardinals were around. Then the COVID 19 pandemic picked up force and one by one my commitments were canceled; and I became glued to the television to follow the unimaginable spread of the virus. In late March, I noticed a robin in our yard, and a few broken walnuts near our flower beds and on the outside deck. Despite the spread of nasty virus, Spring was on the way!

As March faded into April, I noticed more and more robins in the area and saw the squirrels digging in the flowerbeds and running up the trees. I was reminded of the blue jays and the cardinals and wondered if I would see them again. It wasn't long before I did! And since that time, I see them every day! I never see both blue jays at one time, but occasionally I will see

both the male and female cardinal together. Every now and then, I will see one of the blue jays and one or both cardinals together. Of course, as soon as they sense me looking at them, they fly off.

Naturally, I want to get their picture. They are so beautiful! And... I have been continually trying to get a good picture of each of them since early April! It is now a game we play several times a week. They sit there on a tree branch day after day, but the second I pick up my camera (or my phone to use the camera in the phone) – off they fly! I have even exited the house from doors out of their sight, walked around the yard as stealthily as I possibly can and just as I adjust the zoom lens – woosh! Off they fly to another branch higher up in the tree, or to another tree. They play this game with me for about six or seven minutes, then they fly off and out of sight for about an hour.

I have begun talking to them softly and telling them how beautiful they are and asking permission to take their picture. I have gotten a few, but I none that I am satisfied with. I either need to get closer to them or I need a better zoom lens. But our game will continue as it seems they like our trees and if nothing else, I am persistent. The largest blue jay likes to toy with me a bit. Yesterday, while sitting at my office/table and typing, he flew right up onto our deck and sat outside the window looking at me. Of course, when I reached for my phone to take his picture he moved, then walked right up to the window where I was sitting before flying away!

I look forward to the continuation of this saga, and I smile every day when I see the birds in my trees and the squirrels and rabbits in the yard. I have enjoyed studying their behavior and learning more about them. I had to research the blue jay and cardinal call so that I can recognize who was singing when my windows are open. I believe that they just need more time to get used to me and realize that I mean them no harm before I will be able to get a good picture. But I also realize that both types of birds can be a bit aggressive if aggravated or when protecting their nest so I will keep my distance.

Although poor photos, here are my friends.



This is "Jay." Did you know that blue jays do not have a gender difference in coloring or size? And both the male and female participate in nest building and fledging rearing. They do not migrate, and they can fly up to 30 mph! Blue jays are part of the Crow and Raven family. They are very smart and can mimic the Hawk sound to warn other blue jays that a hawk is close by. They are territorial and will chase humans and other animals away from their nests. I have seen Jay chase the squirrels away on numerous occasions. According

to the book *Animal Speak* by Ted Andrews, Blue jays are a symbol of power and intelligence. They have the ability to link the heavens and earth, to access each for greater power.



This is “Red.” He is the male cardinal which is easily identified by the bright red color with a crest on their head, black feathers on his face and a short orange beak. His female partner (which I have yet to get a photo of) has pale brown feathers with a reddish hue on the tips of her wings, tail, and crest. Cardinals do not migrate and like to sit on high perches. The female cardinal builds the nest, but both the male and female take turns incubating their eggs. One is always guarding the nest. They can become extremely territorial and will “dive

bomb” any intruder. Thus, the nickname “Angry Bird.” According to *Animal Speak*, the Cardinal’s presence reflects a time to renew our vitality. It reflects lessons in developing and accepting a new sense of our own self-importance.



Finally, this is “Sam.” Sam is a gray squirrel and is very social in the mornings and late afternoon. He is always scurrying about, always on the move and either looking for food or hiding food. Unless of course he is looking through our sliding glass door and teasing our cats. Did you know that squirrels have keen sense of smell and their sense of smell will enable them to find where they hid (stored) their food even if they forgot where they buried it? They do not hibernate in the winter, so they need to store their food for wintertime, and they will eat heavily and put on weight before winter comes.

According to *Animal Speak* squirrels are symbols of preparedness and activity. They are the masters at preparing, but they also are reminders that in our quest for our goals, we should always make time to socialize and play.

Job 12:7-9 New International Version (NIV) tells us:

7“But ask the animals, and they will teach you,
or the birds in the sky, and they will tell you;

8or speak to the earth, and it will teach you,
or let the fish in the sea inform you.

9Which of all these does not know
that the hand of the LORD has done this?

Dear Lord. Thank you for creating such a beautiful world for us to live in. Thank you for creating such beautiful animals and birds that live among us and bring us messages of hope and joy during times of bewilderment or despair. Help us to open our eyes and realize these gifts. Please also help us to remember to slow down and enjoy the blessings that all living creatures have to offer, and to learn from the squirrels that in our quest for our goals, we need to make time to socialize and play. If not, the work can become more difficult and less fruitful. Amen.

I wish you all a wonderful Memorial Day weekend. Stay safe and let's keep our fingers crossed Franklin County moves into the Yellow Phase soon!

Blessings,
Laurie

P.S. For those of you who liked the coloring pages last week, I have attached two more for you!