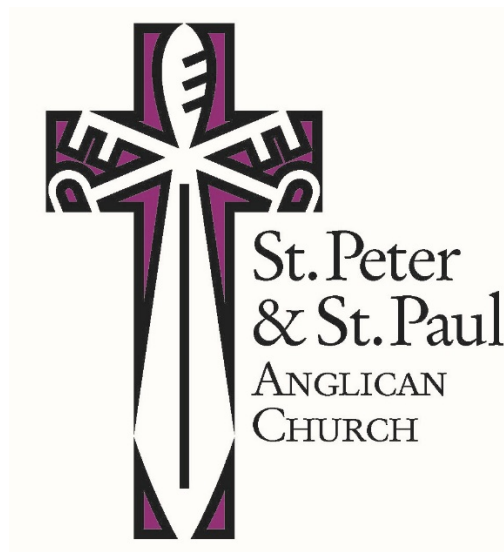


# *Good News Daily*

*Devotional Readings for each day covering the Bible every two years.*

*May 2021*



## **Sunday, May 2**

Psalm 24 *Lift up your heads, you gates; lift them up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in.* (v.9 NIV)

The phone rang early one morning with my doctor on the other end arranging appointments to investigate a suspicious area revealed in recent tests. In those few moments, doors closed and I was on the road unknown. Surgery was scheduled. I called on the Lord for courage and took His holy word in my deepest self. The priceless prayers of friends and prayer partners went to Him. Fear came roaring, but I took the mighty sword of His word, “Lifting up my head, that the King of Glory could come in.” When I thought of the presence of His glory within me, His almighty majesty in my body, mind, and spirit, I knew nothing could ever match the significance of His presence. I placed myself completely there with him and thought of His mighty right arm protecting me. Each time I called on Him, the warmth of His assurance filled and sustained me.

Joshua 17:14-18; Psalm 29; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-17; Matthew 7:7-14

## **Monday, May 3**

Colossians 3:18—4:18 *Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward.*” (vv.23-24a)

Once I found myself in a situation of care-giving that seemed interminable. I asked myself, “Is this how the rest of my life is to be spent?” Sometimes my only prayer was, “Oh God, oh God.” I found He listens to that prayer and comes to us with light. The light is this: we can reverse this prayer and pray for leveling acceptance. This takes a burden from our backs and gives it to Him. My prayer became: “How can I glorify You, Lord, in the middle of all this?” True to His word, He redeems our grief. The greater the trouble, the greater the blessing.

“Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day” (2 Corinthians 4:16).

Joshua 18:1-10; Psalms 56, 57, 58; Luke 7:36-50

## **Tuesday, May 4**

Romans 12:1-21 *Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.* (v.11)

My special friend, Alice, is on a constant lookout to tell others of the saving grace of Jesus Christ. One day, when taking granddaughters to the neighborhood McDonald’s, she noticed a young Down’s syndrome worker. Her late love, Rickie, was a treasured Down’s son, often called God’s angel. On this particular day, she saw Stephanie sitting with her head in her hands and found she was suffering with asthma. Immediately Alice became involved. She told her of the love of Jesus and his healing power. She laid hands on her, praying the Heavenly Father would give Stephanie the breath of life. Alice dropped by McDonald’s frequently to check on her, hug her, and talk about Jesus. Yesterday she found Stephanie jubilant, face shining. “I did what you said! Holy Week I was baptized and found Jesus! I have the Holy Spirit. I did what you said!”

Lord, keep us continually passing on the healing and salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Joshua 20:1-9; Psalms 61, 62; Luke 8:1-15

## **Wednesday, May 5**

Romans 13:1-14 *...for there is no authority except that which God has established.* (v.1b)

During prayer time, I was busy sticking my thoughts negatively into that which was out of my territory. The Lord’s word seemed to come forcefully into my thoughts: “What is that to you (Doris)!” (John 21:22). Although thoughts that occur from the Holy Spirit are usually gentle, these words had a certain tinge that got my attention. Then came, “Don’t get in my way, follow me!” What was I thinking? Getting in the Lord’s way is a fearsome contemplation.

Lord, I only want to follow you. Help me hold back from hurrying into your territory with my flags flying. Help me to be quiet, to pause and wait on you.

Joshua 21:43-45, 22:1-6; Psalm 72; Luke 8:16-25

## **Thursday, May 6**

Romans 14:1-12 *It is written: “‘As surely as I live,’ says the Lord, ‘every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.’”* (v.11)

I was convicted. I needed to bow down and make confession to the Lord. But such a long list, going so far back—I needed to write it all down. However, the very first thing that came to mind was a list of yesterday’s transgressions. And what about five minutes ago? There was a big job ahead.

Fr. Al Durrance suggests the following: “I begin by thanking Jesus for being there with me and the fact that he is able and willing to go back into time with me. I ask him first to go into my deep mind and let his light shine into the dark corners where the little ones are hiding because of rejection, shame, or anger. I ask that he let them come out into the light of his love where he might wash away the negatives and be healed, recalling his presence and the comfort of his love, joy, and peace.”

Joshua 22:7-20; Psalms 70, 71; Luke 8:26-39

### **Friday, May 7**

Psalm 106:1-18 *Who can proclaim the mighty acts of the LORD or fully declare his praise?* (v.2)

Coming up the aisle towards me at a Healing Mission in 1985, was a breathtaking young child, obviously very ill. As I turned to catch another glimpse of her, I was called into the mystery of “knowing” when to pray for strangers. “We passed not speaking, hurried strangers quick retreating. But second pause revealed a shadowed cause; her fragile head, a little body’s tender thread, so pulling thin. A drawn desire to take her in, embrace and pour the Lamb of God to very core. To call the Lord our God to slay the evil chill of ill away with little frame made new again.”

The Light of the Lord was with Stephanie Ann Wisdom before she actually went on to eternal life. All who came in contact with her were made new in the Lord in some way.

Lord, help us watch for the ones You send. Thank You for the privilege of praying for Your beloveds.

Joshua 22:21-34; Romans 14:13-23; Luke 8:40-56

### **Saturday, May 8**

Psalm 75 *In the hand of the LORD is a cup, full of foaming wine mixed with spices; he pours out...* (v.8)

I was sitting at a little consulting table with my physician. “Mrs. Matthews, what do you mean you discontinued your medication because you thought it wasn’t working?” I could see his patience was wearing thin as he handed me my new prescription. The look in his eye indicated firmly, “No more practicing medicine without a license.”

There is a similarity when we pray to the Lord for an urgent need. Time passes. In spite of vigorous prayers, nothing changes; in fact, the needs may intensify. We lose patience. Is He really listening? We think of taking matters into our own hands, but truth is, we can’t. He holds the cup. In the long run, our Lord never fails. Our prayers are always answered well indeed. Perhaps He sees in different light our deeper need. In thanks and Praise! Amen and Amen.

Joshua 23:1-16; Psalm 76; Romans 15:1-13; Luke 9:1-17

*by Doris Matthews*

### **Sunday, May 9**

Matthew 13:24-34a *He told them another parable. “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened.”* (v.33 RSV)

Mystery abounds in life and in fiction. Jesus tells parables, puzzlements themselves, to explain mysteries of the kingdom of God. Does Jesus intend these tales to clarify or to provoke?

How does a small mustard seed, for example, grow into a plant much larger than one would expect? Why does a weed, evil, strongly resemble wheat, good? Why warn of and promise a judgment day? Apparently, time remains for us to grow in goodness before that day, yet we certainly need to keep that day in mind.

Yeast or leaven has, from ancient times, provided further mystery. I, for one, do not understand the bacterial fermentation processes within dough. *Joy of Cooking* informs readers that Mexicans think of these “risers” as souls or spirits. How does leavening hidden within about fifty pounds of flour expand enough to make the whole dough rise?

In three short parables some item is hidden: tares among wheat, seed in soil, leaven in flour. In each case, the hidden item mysteriously grows. Does each act of goodness, yours and mine, somehow result in an expanding kingdom of God?

Joshua 24:1-28; Psalms 93, 96; 1 Timothy 3:14—4:5

### **Monday, May 10**

Luke 9:18-27 *And he said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” And Peter answered, “The Christ of God.”* (v.20)

Today’s readings relate to trials—coming trials of Jesus and continuing trials of his followers. The psalm reminds us that often we beg in our relationship with God. Deuteronomy recalls our needs to keep the commandments and to live for other than bread. James points out that our own desires tempt us. Implied throughout is that trial and testing produce firmer faith.

In the reading from Luke, Jesus asks two questions. He wonders how crowds perceive him, and he receives a variety of responses. His direct and personal question, though, elicits acknowledgment from Peter. In fact, Peter alone confesses here Jesus as the long-awaited Savior—God’s anointed ruler, the Messiah, the Christ of God.

Earlier Jesus was reading in the synagogue in Nazareth of the expected prophet who will relieve the oppressed. Jesus then says, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:21).

In infant Baptism, sponsors confess Christ for us. In creeds we speak for ourselves. We can consider others’ reactions to Jesus Christ, yet his pointed question still confronts us: “But who do you say that I am?”

Deuteronomy 8:1-10; Psalm 80; James 1:1-15

## **Tuesday, May 11**

Luke 11:1-13 *He was praying in a certain place, and when he ceased, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.” And he said to them, “When you pray, say: ‘Father, hallowed be thy name.’”* (vv.1-2)

Jesus reveals how we can pray. I firmly believe his first word charts our course in praying. In responding to his disciple’s request, “Lord, teach us to pray,” without any hesitation Jesus begins: “Father.”

Saying “Father” allows us to acknowledge our relationship with God. The Aramaic “Abba, Father” conveys intimacy and endearment. Whether we say, “Dearest Dad,” “Daddy,” “Papa,” the familiarity of address lets us share with Jesus in his communion with God. Confessing “Father” serves as an individual act as well as a corporate act.

“Father” characterizes the entire Lord’s Prayer, and the Latin *Pater Noster* serves as its title. That utterance admits that God has charge of our lives. It sets priorities. In recognizing our one Father in God, we admit that His kingdom and His will come before ours.

Better than a father and mother head an earthly family, God provides more care, love, discipline, unity, and example. Donald Coggan in the *Oxford Companion to the Bible* says that we seek His “provision, pardon, and protection.” This single word “Father” holds us in relationship for life.

Deuteronomy 8:11-20; Psalm 78:1-39; James 1:16-27

## **Wednesday, May 12**

James 5:13-18 *Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed.* (v.16)

Prayer recurs in this week’s readings, and this advice adds an unexpected twist to our prayer life. We pray for any number of reasons—petitioning, interceding, offering, thanking, confessing, praising, adoring. In this passage, however, the result of praying becomes our own spiritual health.

Are you and I without ease or diseased unless and until we pray? In one outstanding incident, only prayer works to heal one who has an unclean spirit (Mark 9:29).

The writer of the Letter of James has foreseen the usefulness of treating the whole person in healing. Medical practitioners today do encourage the use of a variety of people who can help in that treatment. Mere removal of physical illness may be inadequate. Forgiveness and prayer also prove effective in holistic treatment.

We know we ought to “pray constantly” as Paul directs us to do (1 Thessalonians 5:17). In fact, Paul repeats that counsel (Romans 12:12, Ephesians 6:18, and Colossians 4:2). Paul also offers this help: “We do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words” (Romans 8:26).

Leviticus 26:27-42; Psalm 119:97-120; Luke 12:22-31

## **Thursday, May 13**

Psalm 8 *What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou care for him?* (v.3)

We can imagine the psalmist singing this question on a clear starry night. Considering his asking today, some 2,000 years after the birth of Christ, gives the query new meaning.

The author of the Letter to the Hebrews sees Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of the psalmist’s prophetic probe. We can still ask with humility, “What worth can humankind possibly have in this grand cosmos in the sight of God?” The answer resides in Jesus who lived, suffered, died, and ascended. It is he who is the central meaning for our lives.

Because Jesus was tempted as we, he understands our temptations. He serves as “pioneer and perfecter” of our salvation through his suffering (Hebrews 12:2). We see Jesus in glory because he tasted “death for every one” (Hebrews 2:9).

The question of Psalm 8, then, has its abundant response in the New Covenant. With God’s gift of His Son to us, especially on Ascension Day when our Lord was lifted up, we can readily say, “O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is thy name in all the earth!”

Ezekiel 1:1-14, 24-28b; Psalm 47; Hebrews 2:5-18; Matthew 28:16-20

## Friday, May 14

Luke 9:28-36 *And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!"* (v.35)

Prayer surprises us with revelations. With Jesus himself at prayer, Peter, John, and James see his glory. Then these disciples see, hear, and feel God's presence. The overshadowing cloud and the voice of God startle the three. What does it take to get our attention and theirs?

As we pray, we, too, feel God's presence. With grace we see Jesus. Since God already knows our needs before we ask, we are aligning our wills with his (Matthew 6:8). That alignment furthers the kingdom of God.

That aligning of wills does more; it reveals us to ourselves. God's presence allows us to uncover our own shortcomings. Prayer shows us paths and supplies us strengths. Praying results in answers, too. We leave prayer as persons different from those who entered it.

Although perhaps with less drama than for Peter and his companions, prayer reveals. In praying, then, we discover at least self, Jesus, and God.

Ezekiel 1:28—3:3; Psalms 85, 86; Hebrews 4:14—5:6

## Saturday, May 15

Hebrews 5:7-14 *For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need some one to teach you again the first principles of God's word.* (v.12a)

This scolding reminder tells us, as if we did not know, that we often lack Christian maturity. In matters of morality we can sometimes be found acting as small children.

The Letter to the Hebrews stresses Jesus' supremacy and his full humanity in his temptation and suffering. While priests of old had tried to offer ritual sacrifices, Jesus perfected the process in obediently offering himself for us.

The Hebrews author says, in effect, we are tuning out lessons we ought to hear. The difficult "first principles" message is this: We do not know good from evil. The essential teaching to develop that capability comes as we encounter Jesus as the perfect example of obedience. Said another way, Christian maturity demands of us discipline and practice in recognizing good.

Ezekiel 3:4-17; Psalms 87, 90; Luke 9:37-50

## Sunday, May 16

Psalms 66 *He made a dry path through the Red Sea, and his people went across on foot.* (v.5b NLT)

I woke up the other night to a storm of biblical proportions—the kind you discuss with your neighbors the next day. Thunder angrily roared and boomed over what seemed like miles. Lightning struck down trees all over our little town. The rain relentlessly fell in thick sheets. Most ominous was the howling wind. Having lived in the south, I experienced a couple of hurricanes that were harrowing. This wind seemed mightier and filled with the holy power of the God of the universe. I was scared lying awake, listening to the storm rage outside.

My thoughts went to God using the wind to create a dry path through the Red Sea to provide a way for his people to escape from the Egyptians. I started to sing the old hymn *How Great Thou Art*:

*O Lord my God,  
When I in awesome wonder  
Consider all  
The works Thy Hand hath made,  
I see the stars,  
I hear the mighty thunder,  
Thy pow'r throughout  
The universe displayed...*

And I realized it was the Lord revealing his power throughout the world, and I was no longer scared but hopeful and comforted.

Ezekiel 3:16-27; Psalm 67; Ephesians 2:1-10; Mathew 10:24-33, 40-42

## Monday, May 17

Hebrews 6:1-12 *So come on, let's leave the preschool finger-painting exercises on Christ and get on with the grand work of art. Grow up in Christ!* (v.1 The Message)

My children are young adults. They grew up in the church and gave their lives to the Lord as children. They know the primary colors of their faith. They have been prayed for, prayed over, and received nuggets of spiritual teaching and wisdom from us. All of that will continue, but the next part is on them.

They need to own their faith. They need to study their Bibles, pray, and worship—to develop their artistic skills to continue the analogy. There is so much more to being a follower of Christ than just the basics of forgiveness and salvation. Growing in your faith is walking every day with the Lord—all the triumphs and struggles, the dreary days and rough roads. As one of my children was preparing to move away to begin graduate school, we discussed finding a church to be involved in as a place to serve, grow, and make friends—like working on painting the bigger picture.

I love the image of our lives becoming a grand work of art as we grow in our faith!

Ezekiel 4:1-17; Psalm 89:1-18; Luke 9:51-62

## **Tuesday, May 18**

Hebrews 6:13-20 *Then Abraham waited patiently, and he received what God had promised.* (v.15 NLT)

God's promise to Abraham in verse 14 was, "I will certainly bless you, and I will multiply your descendants beyond number." "Then Abraham waited patiently, and he received what God had promised."

Let's break down this short but rich sentence. Waited—God said He would do something, but it didn't happen immediately or perhaps when Abraham thought it should. God's timing is always better than ours. Patiently—Trusting that God would do what He said He would do even when it didn't seem possible. Abraham certainly could not imagine how his descendants would grow beyond him and Sarah since they had no children. Received—Abraham did nothing to cause or help God's promise to happen. God gave it to him. God gave Abraham what He said he would give him in such abundance. It is the reason we are here today. Promised—God loves us so much and sees us as worthy of making commitments to. He gives His word to us and follows through.

It's such a simple sentence but means so much more. Chew on that for the rest of the day.

Ezekiel 7:10-15, 23b-27; Psalms 97, 99, 100; Luke 10:1-17

## **Wednesday, May 19**

Luke 10:17-24 *At that same time Jesus was filled with the joy of the Holy Spirit...* (v.21)

Jesus found joy in the Holy Spirit by hearing the victories of the disciples He sent out in the Lord's service and in how the Lord was working. I am filled with the joy of the Holy Spirit for many reasons. When I see God working through circumstances in my life and being victorious or when I hear how He has answered someone's prayer. Hearing that someone has given their life to God fills me with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so does serving with brothers and sisters in Christ. Working together creates a bond that is like no other. Praying over someone or being prayed for brings the joy of the Holy Spirit, as does when the Lord speaks to me.

My heart swells with gratefulness and thanksgiving. My eyes fill with tears of delight. My mouth bears a mile-wide grin, and I want to share that joy with others.

Jesus was all God and all man. The idea of sharing the feelings of joy in the Holy Spirit truly blesses me.

Ezekiel 11:14-25; Psalms 101, 109:1-130; Hebrews 7:1-17

## **Thursday, May 20**

Psalm 105:1-22 *Keep your eyes open for GOD, watch for his works; be alert for signs of his presence.* (v.4 The Message)

Have you seen those pictures meant to bend your mind? They're usually of an object and are in two colors. When you look at them at first, you see one image. Shift your focus or look away, then return to the image, and you may see something different that you missed the first time.

At first glance I can look at life one way, but when I ask the Lord to see people or circumstances through His eyes, I often see something very different. Sometimes when I look through God's eyes, I see how He has moved, which I hadn't seen before and it brings me such joy. Another time I asked the Lord to see through His eyes and He reminded me that He loved a person I was struggling with, and He was working in their life as well. It changed how I dealt with that person. It can be a challenge, but it draws me closer to the Lord in the end.

Lord, please open my eyes to see You moving and working in my life and the lives of others. Shift my focus, so I can see the world as You do.

Ezekiel 18:1-4, 19-32; Hebrews 7:18-28; Luke 10:25-37

## **Friday, May 21**

Luke 10:38-42 *But Martha was distracted with all her preparations... (v.40 NASB)*

When I was on a church staff, Easter week was one crazy busy time. Four services to plan all with extra unique creative elements to bring people closer to the Lord in their Easter experience, as well as a cross made of flowers. It was exhausting, and like Martha's dinner party preparations, it drew my attention away from my Lord. I would get distracted by the worship services I was preparing for others.

One Easter week, I took an hour away from worship service preparations to work out. I was running at the gym, worship music coming through my headphones, when I had an Easter moment with the Lord. I already knew Jesus as my Lord and Savior, but I needed to go back to him and celebrate what Easter means. I had a private celebration between the Lord and me.

Service is so important. It is one of the spiritual gifts. Preparing meals for loved ones is equally important. Just don't get so distracted that you miss Jesus in the room.

Ezekiel 34:17-31; Psalm 102; Hebrews 8:1-13

## **Saturday, May 22**

Psalm 108 *And for the sake of the one you love so much, reach down and help me—answer me! (v.6 The Message)*

These words echo a text exchange I had yesterday with a friend. She recently gave her life to the Lord and is just beginning her relationship with Jesus.

I felt a prompting from the Holy Spirit to reach out to her and ask if there was anything specific I could pray about for her. She quickly responded to my text and said she needed help with her anxiety and fears. Stress is so prevalent amid this pandemic. "Reach down and help me—answer me!"

So, I typed my prayer for her. I asked God to wrap his arms around her and remind her that He loved her and would take care of her. Then I sent the text to her and forwarded the devotion I read that morning about not fearing the future alone. It was evident in her reply back to me that God's peace had come over her. He answered her cry to Him.

Ezekiel 43:1-12; Psalm 107:33-43; Hebrews 9:1-14; Luke 11:14-23

*by Mara McClain*

## **Sunday, May 23**

John 14:21-19 *"The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." (v.26)*

Today is the birthday of the Christian church, Pentecost! Fifty days after Easter the disciples are gathered in the temple when they hear a sound like a rushing, mighty wind. Then tongues of fire appear over their heads and they begin to speak in languages not their own—and visitors to Jerusalem hear them tell the good news about Jesus in their native languages. Peter preaches a mighty sermon reminding them of Joel's and David's words and 3,000 new believers confess Jesus as their Lord—the work of the Holy Spirit!

Jesus gives us his same Holy Spirit today to work faith in our hearts and help us become more like Jesus in our daily life as we allow him to work in our hearts and share our faith with our families, friends, neighbors, and co-workers.

Dear Jesus, thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth, and help us share the gospel with his power.

Isaiah 11:1-9; Psalm 118; 1 Corinthians 2:1-13

## **Monday, May 24**

Psalm 25 *Turn to me and be gracious to me for I am lonely and afflicted. (v.16)*

As I am writing these devotions my retirement community has been on lockdown for almost six months. It has been a lonely time of having meals brought to the door, not being able to hug my family or have them visit me, not having our usual group activities, not being able to go to church or take Holy Communion (but thankfully being able to watch our church on my computer). It has been a time of lots of prayer and phone calls. I regularly claim Psalm 23:4, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil for Thou art with me."

One of the other readings for today is 2 Corinthians 1:1-11: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of all mercies and the God of all comfort who comforts us in all our affliction" (vv.3-4). So true, these times make us depend on our faith to carry us through when all else fails. I pray for a vaccine to be developed quickly and that the pandemic will draw us closer to God rather than drive us from Him.

**Tuesday May 25**

Deuteronomy 4:15-24 *“So watch yourselves, lest you forget the covenant of the LORD your God, which He made with you...”* (v.23)

When things are going well for us, we often begin thinking that God’s blessings are the reward for our own smart brains, good choices, and hard efforts, rather than because of His goodness and tender mercy. We need to practice the attitude of gratitude each day and recognize God’s blessings, kindness, and answers to our prayers. Remember our covenant with the Lord!

As we continue to pray for help with all the big and little concerns of our life, we need to add another petition: Please give me one thing more, a grateful heart.

Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Thank You, Lord!

Psalms 26, 28; 2 Corinthians 1:12-22; Luke 15:1-10

**Wednesday, May 26**

2 Corinthians 1:23—2:17 *But thanks be to God, who always lead us in his triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of him in every place. For we are the fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved...* (vv.14-15)

What a beautiful image—the fragrance of Christ—a sweet aroma! I love to smell roses, carnations, lilacs, and other fragrant flowers. So I am delighted by the apostle Paul telling the Corinthian Christians (and us) to be the sweet aroma of Christ that will draw many others to faith in him. Our life can be either a foul order of sin and unbelief or a sweet fragrance that makes our family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers want to know more about the faith that is in us.

Please make me a sweet aroma that draws others to you, Lord Jesus.

Deuteronomy 4:25-31; Psalm 38; Luke 15:1-2, 11-32

**Thursday, May 27**

Psalm 37:1-18 *Trust in the LORD and do good... Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD, trust also in him and he will do it.* (vv.3-5)

The psalmist, David, is reminding us of our security in the Lord. He states that evildoers will wither quickly like grass. Even though they seem to succeed and prosper, they will reap the evil that they sow.

What a great comfort it is to know that our Heavenly Father has the ultimate control of the universe, and that He will give us the desires of our hearts which, for believers, is to be with Him forever.

Jesus paid the price of our salvation on the cross of Calvary. All we have to do is accept God’s gracious gift with gratitude and obey His word and walk in His ways. And His Holy Spirit helps us do this.

Dear Jesus, thank you for dying on the cross for me; help me to live for you.

Deuteronomy 4:32-40; 2 Corinthians 3:1-18; Luke 16:1-9

**Friday, May 28**

Psalm 31 *Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who hope in the LORD!* (v.24)

When we feel weak and weary from all the problems we read about in the newspaper and hear on newscasts, we need to remind ourselves of this verse. God is in control; we do not need to be fearful.

I confess that many days I am praying over and over again, “Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” as I try to be an informed citizen. There is so much hate and fear in our country as I write this, plus stress about Covid-19. One of my Christian friends asked the other day, “Do you think these are the end-times of the book of Revelation?”

Our hope in the Lord is the only thing we can depend on. And because of it, we can indeed be strong and take courage

Dear Lord, please forgive our sins and heal our country.

Deuteronomy 5:1-22; 2 Corinthians 4:1-12; Luke 16:10-18

**Saturday, May 29**

2 Corinthians 4:13—5:10 *We walk by faith, not by sight—we are of good courage.* (vv.7-8a)

In these days of so many national problems: health, racial, and economic concerns, we can easily be filled with fear and worry. We need to remind ourselves that Jesus says he will never leave us or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5) and, despite us



living in a broken world, he is in ultimate control. We can indeed walk by faith and not by sight and be of good courage. Hebrews 13:6 also assures us, “the Lord is my Helper I will not be afraid.”

A spiritual discipline I use every day is to “put on” the whole armor of God: “the helmet of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, the belt of truth, the shoes of the gospel of peace, the sword of the Spirit and the shield of faith” (Ephesians 6:13ff). It is our protection and our defense.

Please help us be strong in you, Lord Jesus, and wait patiently for you.

Deuteronomy 5:22-33; Psalms 30, 32; Luke 16:19-31

*by Jacqueline Littleford*

### **Sunday, May 30**

Deuteronomy 11:1-12 *Understand today that it is not your children who experienced or saw the discipline of the LORD your God.* (v.2 CSB)

One of the best songs in the musical *Hamilton* is “Who Lives, Who Dies, Who Tells Your Story.” Sung after the untimely death of Alexander Hamilton, the song relates how his wife Eliza spent the next fifty years interviewing his associates, collecting his letters, and being a witness his life. She wanted his remarkable contributions to this country to be remembered, and she did it by “telling his story.”

Moses outlived nearly all of the people who’d been freed from Egypt, but he couldn’t live forever. As he neared death, he knew how easy it would be for the coming generations—those who never experienced slavery or the years of wandering—to forget. He knew how important it was for the witnesses to “tell God’s story” to their children.

We’ve also been witnesses to the Lord’s work in our lives. Maybe it’s not a burning bush or wandering forty years in the wilderness, but it is just as important. Consider telling someone how the Lord has worked in your life. Only you have experienced your unique part of God’s story.

Psalms 63, 98; Revelation 10:1-11; Matthew 13:44-58

### **Monday, May 31**

2 Corinthians 5:11—6:2 *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.* (v.17 ESV)

This passage is one of the most encouraging of Paul’s writings. He uses the language of vine dressers who graft new shoots on to time-tested root stock to bring about a new creation in Christ. But one thing is often overlooked in this joyful passage: in order for a new thing to be born, something else has to die.

As a prayer minister, I watched as people brought their old, soul-destroying grievances to the Lord in prayer. And I watched some of them walk right back out holding tight to these grievances. Some felt they offered protection from a destructive situation. Others received their identity through them. For some it was simply habit, while others wanted “someone to pay.” But they all had one thing in common: not trusting Jesus to cut off this old root to allow for new growth.

My story was the same. For decades a tough root of bitterness choked my heart. I did not trust the Lord to defend me against those who sought my soul. But when I finally repented of this mistrust, I felt a giant weight lifted from my heart.

There are always those prowling around seeking my soul, but now I trust the Lord to protect me. If you’re clinging to an old root, don’t wait decades like I did. Repent of it *today!*

Deuteronomy 11:13-19; Psalms 41, 52; Luke 17:1-10

### **Tuesday, June 1**

Luke 17:11-19 *As he entered a village there, ten men with leprosy stood at a distance, crying out, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” One of them, when he saw that he was healed, came back to Jesus, shouting, “Praise God!”* (vv.12-13, 15 NLT)

Until modern times, leprosy was an incurable disease that isolated you from everyone and everything you loved. If you contracted it, you instantly lost your job and your family, along with any hope of survival. Your only identity was Leper. You were truly and horribly alone as the disease slowly ate away at your body. That’s why Jesus healing ten lepers at once must have been such an amazing event.

And yet, nine didn’t return to thank Christ for healing them. Maybe one had a sick child at home. Maybe another wanted to forget the whole horrible experience, which also meant forgetting the curing part. Maybe another wanted to catch the last game of March Madness (okay, this isn’t accurate, but you get the point). Probably all these men felt they had solid reasons for not returning to thank Jesus, but at the heart of all their excuses lives a disease far more deadly than leprosy: Ingratitude.

Not being grateful for the blessings from God devours happiness and joy. It can ruin anything—even miracles.  
Deuteronomy 12:1-12; Psalm 45; 2 Corinthians 6:3—7:1

### Wednesday, June 2

Psalm 119:49-72 *At midnight I rise to give you thanks for your righteous laws.* (v.62 NIV)

I am not one to rise at midnight and give thanks to God for His righteous laws. I'm also not one to rise in the morning or to pause at noon to do it. All too often my prayers contain all the enthusiasm of reciting the alphabet.

But when I fall into this indifference, I remember “Pangur Ban.” Written by an anonymous Irish Monk in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, this wonderful poem compares the scholar’s work to the activities of his pet cat.

I and Pangur Ban my cat,  
‘Tis a like task we are at:  
Hunting mice is his delight,  
Hunting words I sit all night.

Both the nameless monk and the psalmist knew that reading Scripture is a joyful experience. Today, I invite you to join Pangur Ban and enjoy the hunt!

Deuteronomy 13:1-11; 2 Corinthians 7:2-16; Luke 17:20-37

### Thursday, June 3

Psalm 50 *Call on me in a day of trouble: I will rescue you and you will honor me.* (v.15 CSB)

I'm writing this during the summer of 2020, when the entire country seems to be burning. It's a frightening time, but it is also nothing new. Psalm 50 gives voice to God's view of rebellion, both in the community and in the human heart. It is a sobering psalm, but also an encouraging one, because it offers the Lord's remedy: “Call on me in a day of trouble: I will rescue you and you will honor me.”

“A day of trouble” is a blessed time because we know that our *only* hope is God. As Stuart Townsend's modern hymn proclaims, “In Christ alone my hope is found. He is my light my strength, my song. This cornerstone, this solid ground, firm through the fiercest drought and storm.”

Storms come and go, but Jesus is always our rescuer. “Days of trouble” reveal this precious truth.

Deuteronomy 16:18-20, 17:14-20; 2 Corinthians 8:1-16; Luke 18:1-8

### Friday, June 4

Psalm 54 *For strangers are attacking me; violent people are trying to kill me. They care nothing for God. But God is my helper. The Lord keeps me alive!* (vv.3-4 NLT)

I was born physically disabled. Eventually everything worked out, but during my first seven years I wasn't able to keep up with the other kids physically. And kids, being kids, bullied me mercilessly. I still remember them circling me on the playground and gleefully yelling out insults. I knew some of these children—some had even been my friends—but at that moment they were violent strangers attacking me with their painful words.

Yet it was in that terrible moment that I first heard the Lord's voice: “Don't believe them. Believe me,” He said. I knew nothing of theology, but I knew that this voice offered life and friendship, not death and shame. I've followed it ever since.

Maybe someone reading this is going through a terrible moment. If so, turn to God. A few millennia ago David turned to Him, and a few decades ago I turned to Him. Both King David and I found a mighty advocate and a lifegiving defender who will never desert us. You will too!

Deuteronomy 26:1-11, Psalm 40; 2 Corinthians 8:16-24; Luke 18:9-14

### Saturday, June 5

Luke 18:15-30 *“In fact, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God!”* (v.25 NLT)

My parents passed on many good qualities to me, but my favorite is a sense of humor. No matter how tough life got (and it got pretty tough sometimes), we were always able to find something to laugh about in the situation. Humor makes life's hard lessons easier to learn.

Jesus also inherited a great sense of humor from his Father. After devastating the rich young ruler with the truth about worshiping money above God, he followed it up with a hysterical illustration of a fat, wobbly, over-loaded camel trying to squeeze through a narrow city gate (the Needle Gate, which still exists in Jerusalem). It's a very funny image that everyone would have understood, especially since I suspect the rich young ruler was a bit fat and wobbly himself.

Mark's Gospel tells this same story, but he adds that Jesus loved the man (Mark 10:21). Christ could have condemned the young ruler, but instead his insight might have helped the man see his own folly and repent. Humor makes life's hard lessons easier to learn. And, frankly, who among doesn't have an over-loaded camel or two that needs unpacking?  
Deuteronomy 29:2-15, Psalm 55; 2 Corinthians 9:1-15

*by Ruth Owen*

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