

Good News Daily

Sunday, September 6

Psalm 63 *O God, you are my God, I seek you, my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.* (v.1 NRSV)

As I read these lines, I am struck by the passion of the person writing them and am compelled to reflect on my own relationship with God. Do I seek God passionately? Does my soul thirst for him as someone in a desert thirsts for water after days without? Is my desire for God such that my breath catches in my throat and I become faint?

The Bible is alive with people who exhibit a passionate relationship with God: Hannah is so passionate in prayer that Eli mistakes her state as that of someone whose inhibitions have been removed by an excess of alcohol. David is so overwhelmed by joy at the return of the Ark that he dances ecstatically in the streets of Jerusalem and is undaunted by the approbation of his wife. And it is said of him that he is a man after God's own heart.

Catherine of Siena described God as being "pazzo d'amore"—crazed with love for us. The psalmist challenges you and I to respond to that love with the same passion.

Job 25:1-6, 27:1-6; Psalm 98; Revelation 14:1-7, 13; Matthew 5:13-20

Monday, September 7

John 10:19-30 *"If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly."* (v.24b)

Jesus replies that he has done just that but that they have not believed, and then he tells them again: "The Father and I are one." After nearly two millennia of Christian writings, we can read this and ask ourselves, "Were they completely blind?" And yet, if I am honest, how many times have I asked in prayer, "Tell me plainly; what

would you have me do, where would you have me go?"

It is the "plainly" that got the Jews in trouble, and it is the "plainly" that gets me in trouble. They had certain expectations of a Messiah, but they were not God's design for Messiahship. Maybe I have certain expectations too, certain parameters for "plain" responses that blind me to a movement of God. I am looking for a response in one direction, but the response comes from the opposite direction—not at all what I was expecting.

I am called to suspend my expectations and just trust God's heart.

Job 32:1-10, 19—33:1, 19-28; Psalms 41, 52;
Acts 13:44-52

Tuesday, September 8

Psalm 45 *Gird your sword on your thigh, O mighty one, in your glory and majesty.* (v.3)

As a little girl I loved the fairy tales about princes and princesses. I would imagine that I was Rapunzel, or Sleeping Beauty, or Snow White, or Cinderella. The ending of course was always the same: I was a princess who was rescued by a dashing prince on a white horse who would stop at nothing to sweep me up out of the evil situation I found myself in.

Little did I know as a young girl that such a prince actually existed—not just a prince but a king! "Then I saw heaven opened, and there was a white horse! Its rider is called Faithful and True...the armies of heaven, wearing fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses...On his robe and on his thigh he has a name inscribed, "King of Kings and Lord of Lords." Our King is poised at the head of his army ready to sweep us into his arms out of the clutches of the Enemy.

Job 29:1-20; Acts 14:1-18; John 10:31-42

Wednesday, September 9

Psalm 119:49-72 *At midnight I rise to praise you, because of your righteous ordinances.* (v.62)

Law and love don't seem to go together in our modern mindset. Maybe it is Madison Avenue's dictum of "Just do it," or Frank Sinatra's "I did it my way," or maybe it is a fear of becoming legalistic like the Pharisees that makes us associate the law with a hellfire and brimstone message. Certainly, praising God in prayer in the middle of the night because of His law has not been my experience. And yet it is the experience of the psalmist, so much so that the longest of all the psalms is a eulogy on the law.

Jesus clearly states that he has not come to abolish, but to fulfill the law (Matthew 5:17). And it is perhaps in those Sermon on the Mount passages that we can better understand why the law is so dear to the psalmist's heart. God's law—not the Pharisees' interpretation nor their implementation of it, but the true intent—is to provide security, safety, and wholeness for His people. God's law reveals God's character; it reveals His heart and His care for His people.

Job 29:1, 30:1-2, 16-31; Acts 14:19-28; John 11:1-16

Thursday, September 10

John 11:17-29 *She said to him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world."* (v.27)

I love this passage for Martha, and for all of us who are more compelled at times to do rather than to sit and listen. I think Martha tends to remain in our minds as the busy one whom Jesus rebukes for her busyness as her sister Mary sits at the Master's feet. And yet here she is—the first one to come out of the house to greet Jesus after the death of her brother Lazarus, proclaiming her faith in Jesus' ability to heal.

But it is her response to Jesus' revelation: "I am the Resurrection and the Life," that sets her

apart. Earlier in John's Gospel, Peter makes a confession of faith on behalf of all the disciples: "We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God." But it is Martha, amongst all of Jesus' followers, who makes the most complete confession of faith. Despite her tendency to busyness, she had nonetheless taken the time to listen to and understand the Master's words, and she is redeemed by his revelation and her response.

Job 29:1, 31:1-23; Psalm 50; Acts 15:1-11

Friday, September 11

John 11:30-44 *When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."* (vv.43-44 NIV)

This story jumps into such vivid relief. The emotional scene is set: the grieving sisters surrounded by grieving friends, and Jesus who weeps, perhaps both for their grief and for Lazarus. The sense of smell is evoked with Martha's words about the length of time the body has been in the tomb. The sense of hearing: Jesus is not quiet in his command but loud. Even though we know the outcome there is still a sense of anticipation—and then Lazarus appears. But this is the first time that I noticed that the text does not say "Lazarus came out" but "the dead man came out." A dead man walking!

Are we not all dead "men" walking except for Christ's sacrifice for us? In the NRSV, Jesus' command is "unbind him." The enemy's constraints that keep us dead are released. The grave clothes are removed by grace through faith. Not only are the grave clothes removed, but we are given Christ's raiment to wear. Thanks be to God!

Job 29:1, 31:24-40; Psalms 40, 54; Acts 15:12-

Saturday, September 12

Psalm 55 *Give ear to my prayer, O God; do not hide yourself from my supplication... I am troubled in my complaint... But I will trust in you.* (vv.1, 2, 23 NRSV)

Even though the psalmist finds himself in a dark place and would seem to have a sense of God's distance as he pleads for Him to hear and not hide, he nonetheless places his complete trust in God. It is to such a trust that we are called.

Brennan Manning writes this about trust: "The splendor of a human heart which trusts that it is loved gives God more pleasure than Westminster Cathedral, the Sistine Chapel, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, Van Gogh's *Sunflowers*, the sight of ten thousand butterflies in flight, or the scent of a million orchids in bloom...When the shadow of Jesus' cross falls across our lives in the form of failure, rejection...depression, the loss of a loved one; when we are deaf to everything but the shriek of our own pain...It requires heroic courage to trust in the love of God no matter what happens to us...Trust is our gift back to God, and he finds it so enchanting that Jesus died for love of it." [Ruthless Trust]

Job 38:1-17; Acts 15:22-35; John 11:45-54

by Sarah Bronos

Used with permission from the BIBLE
READING FELLOWSHIP
P. O. Box 380, Winter Park, FL 32790
www.biblereading.org

Good News Daily

Sunday, September 13

Psalm 29 *The voice of the LORD causes the oaks to whirl, and strips the forest bare; and in his temple all say, "Glory!" The LORD sits enthroned over the flood; the LORD sits enthroned as king forever. May the LORD give strength to his people! May the LORD bless his people with peace!* (vv.9-11 NRSV)

These verses describe the confusion that I feel, and I know others do too, in listening to the news, as well as reading different and recent opinions from other people, groups, and friends. The issue of peace and the Lord's people who are charged with respecting and following God's plan for living life are of great concern.

Living life with each other, with love being the guiding principal, is not an easy charge. God is almighty and He has chosen to work through His children. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to live the life God has laid out for us while working daily on an individual, personal level; yet not allowing ourselves to bypass having a loving, forgiving relationship with our brothers and sisters. If we try to find someone to pin the blame on, we start pointing our finger and dividing our world into separate groups on which we can lay the blame. This in turn makes it easier to divide the world and the people into many camps with various groups justifying their hatred of disparate groups of people. It is their fault.

Our ability is to control our own actions instead of allowing ourselves to succumb to the attacks which "strips the forests bare; and in his temple all say, 'Glory!'"— This is not easy, and, without our faith, we cannot do it.

Job 38:1, 18-41; Psalm 24; Revelation 18:1-8;
Matthew 5:21-26

Monday, September 14

John 11:55—12:8 *But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor? Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me." (vv.4-5, 7-8)*

I had this same reaction and found this to be a confusing relationship when considering the beauty of some of the official buildings. Why is it okay to put the poor's needs secondary in such a situation? I've most often heard that in order to worship the Lord we are to help the poor; yet here Jesus points to her reasonable choice to keep the expensive perfume for her own use and desire and to allow Mary to anoint him prior to his death. It seems like a lot of money could be saved by purchasing a cheaper anointing oil for Jesus and that this would be a more consistent message about serving the poor.

My husband and I went to Rome approximately six years ago. I remember feeling amazed at the elaborate decorations that existed within the walls of St. Peter's Basilica, but also thought about the extravagant cost and how many could be fed with those funds. Within a few minutes I was overwhelmed by the beauty and moved to tears. It was as if my soul was responding to the beauty of the perfume—the architecture, of glorifying, praising, exalting God at a different level that is not usually accessible to me.

Job 40:1-24; Psalms 56, 57, 58; Acts 15:36—
16:5

Tuesday, September 15

Psalm 62 *Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us.* (v.8)

Sometimes I really wonder what God is doing in my life. I tell Him, "Lord I have had enough challenging events and I really don't think I need any more. Could we wait a little bit longer before we tackle another one?" This, of course, is very ignorant and selfish on my part.

God has shown me many times in my life how He is there for me; how He has been there to take me in His arms and comfort me, to give me the strength I need to simply look at experiences in my life and see how I have been able to call out to Him and know He is there. He has consistently provided support through other people to help me get through each problem. God has demonstrated his consistency in answering my prayers, though they weren't always the ways I thought were right. He has been so consistently true to His word of answering prayer, such as when my brother died of cancer when only 24 years old. I have been much better providing support to people in similar situations when they thought they couldn't talk to anyone else.

The Lord often had answers that made sense a few weeks, months, or years later, and yet sometimes never made sense. I understand the Lord's way is not mine and, often, I may not be able to understand it at all; yet I will continue to accept His way.

Job 40:1, 41:1-11; Psalm 61; Acts 16:6-15; John
12:9-19

Wednesday, September 16

Job 42:1-17 *"My wrath is kindled against you and against your two friends; for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has." (v.7)*

Mom took care of Dad the last several years of his life, so her time was limited. After he had joined the community of saints, she reached out to many people who were lonely and felt like something was missing. Throughout her life, Mom had a special commitment to education,

especially to those who had learning problems or felt embarrassed to start learning later in life—sometimes learning as adults the same lessons their kids were learning. Mom began to give private instruction and helped them to see how it was beneficial for the students to interact, and that it was something of which to be proud.

Often people who she invited to her luncheons were uninvolved in the church family or community. Mom joined the choir she had helped form and reassured people that the Lord said, “Make a joyful noise unto the Lord.” He never said make your sounds a well-trained noise, a voice which could hit all the notes. I have great respect for these people who will step out and let others know that they do not know certain things and then show the courage to go forward continuing to learn what they need to most effectively carry out what God has called them to do.

Psalm 72; Acts 16:16-24; John 12:20-26

Thursday, September 17

Job 28:1-28 *And he said to humankind, “Truly, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.”* (v.28)

The Lord has with such care connected all life together. Sometimes I find it easier to understand these connections than some of the more academic ones. I find it truly amazing that God has put the many details together. That nature can live so harmoniously is really quite amazing! God has called us to work together to save the world. He also must be calling us to be cognizant of the need to recognize the importance of each person accepting each person as part of the whole story.

I do not put any theory out as to how to restore world peace, but I do know each of us needs to accept each other as part of the whole story, loving and receiving the wholeness we have within each of us. I’ve found that when I am

pointing my finger at a member of my family, I am dividing rather than calling them into one where we can all work together.

Psalms 70, 71; Acts 16:25-40; John 12:27-36a

Friday, September 18

Acts 17:1-15 *But the Jews became jealous, and with the help of some ruffians in the marketplaces they formed a mob and set the city in an uproar.* (v.5a)

I studied group behavior many years ago in school and learned negative actions are hard to extinguish when members of a group are feeding off one another. Outsiders often seem eager get the crowd stirred up. The “show” this creates can be much more impressive when these groups work together to make the leaders think there is more upset than there may actually be—especially in some political situations. To them, it justifies their right to take it to a higher level, as well as condones the actions that may be abhorrent to others in the community in which they live. This is a strategy that persists and is used today at all levels—sometimes, unfortunately, with great success.

I wonder how I, as an individual person, can choose not to participate in these negative actions. There are simple ways, which may not be so obvious. I can do the easy thing and say I don’t believe in what you are doing and then walk away. But the better choice would be to become educated on the issues at hand so I can know the facts and can confidently stand up to the group, loudly, if necessary. I can share my new-found knowledge and encourage others to take a stand as well.

Esther 1:1-4, 10-19; Psalm 69; John 12:36b-43

Saturday, September 19

Psalm 75 *We give thanks to you, O God; we give thanks; your name is near. People tell of your wonderful deeds.* (v.1)

The Lord has taught us, through Bible stories and the teaching of great theologians as well as His children, that one of the best ways to be obedient to God is to praise Him for His glorious works—which we can see through His children who, in turn, share their story. These stories can be shared by ordinary people, relaying how they handled a certain situation.

There are many opportunities to share how God has played a part in my own life. I have had a number of health challenges, which I have been able to use to help others keep a positive attitude. We have certain built-in helpers which help us heal, such as laughter, spending time with family and friends, and reading books that have helped others. Let it be known that you are available to share your story with someone in need.

Esther 2:5-8, 15-23; Psalm 76; Acts 17:16-34;
John 12:44-50

by Jean Hess

Used with permission from the BIBLE
READING FELLOWSHIP
P. O. Box 380, Winter Park, FL 32790
www.biblereading.org

Good News Daily

Sunday, September 20

Psalm 34 *The LORD is near to the brokenhearted, and saves the crushed in spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD rescues them from them all.* (vv.18-19 NRSV)

Are you crushed in spirit? “Crushed,” in Hebrew is *dakka*, which means bruised, humbled, discouraged, broken in spirit, cast down, contrite.

I have three children. When they get hurt, they want a kiss on their “boo-boos” and a band-aid to make it better. Sometimes our hurts are on the inside where only God can see. There just doesn’t seem to be a big enough band-aid to make it better. Perhaps you have lost a loved one or have been through the pain of a divorce. Maybe you are experiencing trouble with your children or a job loss. Life just isn’t going the way you thought it would.

Allow God to comfort you through the psalms: “The LORD is near to the brokenhearted.” Psalm 37:23-24 says, “Our steps are made firm by the LORD, when he delights in our way; though we stumble, we shall not fall headlong, for the LORD holds us by the hand.”

Yes, He holds our hand, too. His love “kisses” our hurts. His salvation makes us better. Esther 3:1—4:3; Psalms 93, 96; James 1:19-27; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

Monday, September 21

Luke 1:1-4, 3:1-14 *In reply he said to them, “Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.”* (v.11)

In America, we live in the midst of such abundance. Sometimes in the haste of everyday living, we may find it easy to forget Jesus’ commandment to “love one another.” Yet, I have had the awesome experience of being on the receiving end of God’s love through His people.

Last year, Christmas was drawing near. As a newly single Mom on a very small budget, I felt anxious and afraid about spending money on gifts for my children. I did not tell others of my feelings, but God knew my heart.

Near Christmas Eve, two families who were complete strangers showed up at my parents’ home. They unloaded so many gifts from their vehicles that the living room and one bedroom were filled with presents for my children and me. These special messengers of God’s love had followed God’s commandment, giving anonymously and freely in Jesus’ name. Oh, how this built up my faith, amazed my children, and witnessed Christ to my grandfather.

What a challenge this gives us to share and also to trust God for our needs. Who knows how God might touch others’ lives through you!

Esther 4:4-17; Psalm 80; Acts 18:1-11

Tuesday, September 22

Psalm 78:1-39 *Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth. We will not hide them from their children; we will tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done.* (vv.1, 4)

Since she was an infant, my daughter has loved to look at family photos. My parents had a little gallery of photos on a hallway wall. Before she could speak, Kayla would want someone to lift her each day to look at them. Now older, she and her brothers find continual delight in hearing stories told again and again about themselves and their family. I believe that God gives people a love for stories as a gift, which develops bonding and a sense of belonging, place, and purpose.

We have a rich source from which to include stories of our Heavenly Father—His love, plan, and purpose for us. As you repeat Bible stories, they will become beloved to your children. Share with them the things God has

done for you. Their faith will grow. God’s word will be planted, nourished, and reaped in salvation as you lead your children to faith in Jesus Christ. They are never too young to learn about God.

Esther 5:1-14; Acts 18:12-28; Luke 3:15-22

Wednesday, September 23

Psalm 119:97-120 *Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.* (v.105)

When I get up in the morning for work it is dark outside. I climb out of bed and go straight to my coffee maker. I turn it on, stumbling into the living room to wake up. Sure enough, almost every time, I step on a small toy. Ouch! I remind myself again to buy a night-light.

Sometimes the path which we follow in life is dark. Often, when we least expect it, we may be hurt along the way. Sometimes we don’t understand why we are experiencing hardship and pain. In today’s psalm, the psalmist prays, “I am severely afflicted; give me life, O Lord, according to your word” (v.107).

Let God’s word be the light on your dark paths. Let Him show you the path He wants you to take. You can pray this psalm for yourself, asking God to revive you with His own life. His promise: “to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine” (Ephesians 3:20).

Esther 6:1-14; Acts 19:1-10; Luke 4:1-13

Thursday, September 24

Esther 7:1-10 *On the second day, as they were drinking wine, the king again said to Esther, “What is your petition, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you. And what is your request? Even to the half of my kingdom, it shall be fulfilled.”* (v.2)

Esther, a young Hebrew, became queen to a foreign king in a foreign land. Unaware of his bride’s nationality, he had unwittingly marked her

people for death. Esther's uncle Mordecai asked Esther to risk her life by speaking to the king about their plight. Mordecai admonishes her in verse 4:14, "if you keep silence at such a time as this, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another quarter, but you and your father's family will perish. Who knows? Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this."

She could risk her life or be silent. She wisely chose to trust God. The king granted her favor. The Hebrews were spared. God had indeed put Esther into an influential position "for such a time as this."

God strategically places His people to accomplish His work. You may find yourself in "such a time as this." Pray for guidance. God's promises include Isaiah 41:10: "do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand."

Psalms 146, 147; Acts 19:11-20; Luke 4:14-30

Friday, September 25

Psalm 91 *You who live in the shelter of the Most High, who abide in the shadow of the Almighty, will say to the LORD, "My refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust."* (vv.1-2)

I remember when I walked alongside my parents when I was a little girl. In the sunshine, their shadows were so huge compared to my own! As a child, it was comforting to know that however big they or their shadows were, I was dearly loved by them.

What a comfort for me to know now, as a Christian, I dwell in the shadow of the Most High, yes, in the shadow of the Almighty. That is one *big* shadow! His shade provides relief and shelter from the day's "heat"—all the difficulties that come my way. When His shadow falls upon me, although I may not see Him face to face, I am certain His presence is with me.

In the same psalm, His comfort continues, for His angels do His bidding, guarding me and watching over me wherever I am (v.11). This is your promise, too, beloved child of God.

Esther 8:1-8; 15-17; Psalm 88; Acts 19:21-41;
Luke 4:31-37

Saturday, September 26

Luke 4:38-44 *As the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various kinds of diseases brought them to him; and he laid his hands on each of them and cured them.* (v.40)

What a beautiful picture of Jesus is shown in this verse! The Son of God laid his hands on the sick, healing them. What about today? Does God still desire to heal us? The Bible is clear: "Are any among you suffering? They should pray. Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise. Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven" (James 5: 13-15).

Do you know people who are sick and hurting? Follow Jesus. This is his commandment from the Father, who dwelt in Jesus to do the work. Today, Christ dwells in us. The Church is the Body of Christ. Should the hand or foot refuse to do the will of the "head"? Beloved, we have the mind of Christ. Is the mind separate from the body?

Perhaps your church has a healing ministry where the Body of Christ administers God's work of healing. I encourage you to participate in this demonstration of His love.

Hosea 1:1—2:1; Psalms 87, 90; Acts 20:1-16

by Heidi Bender

Used with permission from the BIBLE
READING FELLOWSHIP
P. O. Box 380, Winter Park, FL 32790
www.biblereading.org

Good News Daily

Sunday, September 27

James 3:1-13 *All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.* (v.7 NIV)

I daresay that all of us have at one time or another found that our own tongues are difficult to “tame.” We say words that hurt others, words we regret and wish we hadn’t said. It is perplexing that this same hurtful tongue can also speak kind words of love, forgiveness, and understanding. James says this in verse 10: “Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be.”

It is such a terrible feeling we get when we blurt out a reaction without first thinking about the effect our words will have on another person. Those “evil” words seem to hang out there in the air in front of us and we wish with all our heart that we could retract them. Sometimes we realize our mistake immediately, but other times it may be days or weeks before we reflect on what we have said. It requires the Holy Spirit and humility to admit to and repent of our verbal sins.

Dearest Lord Jesus, thank you for your love and forgiveness. May my heart overflow with your love as you help me to tame my tongue. Hosea 2:2-14; Psalms 66, 67; Matthew 13:44-52

Monday, September 28

Luke 5:1-11 *Then Jesus said to Simon, “Don’t be afraid; from now on you will catch men.” So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.* (vv.10b-11)

What an incredible turn of events this was for Peter, James, and John, partners in the fishing business. I cannot imagine what a strong influence Jesus’ words must have had on these

men to make them willing to leave behind their livelihood, families, and friends in order to become “fishers of men.” Do you think you would have had that kind of courage? It certainly wouldn’t have seemed logical or rational, would it? Only by the power of the Holy Spirit working in their hearts could this have been possible.

This scene reminds me of a prayer that a very godly woman shared with me early in my walk with Jesus: “I am willing to be made willing to *receive* whatever you send, *relinquish* whatever you take, *lack* whatever you withhold, *suffer* whatever you permit, *do* whatever you tell me to do, and *be* whatever you want me to be.” Amen.

Hosea 2:14-23; Psalm 89:1-18; Acts 20:17-38

Tuesday, September 29

Luke 5:12-26 *But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.* (v.16)

I wrote in my Bible next to this verse, “We need to do this.” As I looked at my written words, not knowing how long ago I might have penned them, I decided to strike through the “We” and replace it with “I.” Perhaps I did this because this verse convicts my spirit that I need to get alone, be quiet, and pray much more often than I actually do.

Thinking about Jesus and his roughly three years of ministry on earth, I am increasingly fascinated by how close he was to his Father. Living and ministering in a human society, with his following growing, he must have found it very difficult to find time to get alone for prayer. There were always people wanting his healing touch and desiring to hear him teach and preach. If sinless Jesus often withdrew for prayer, how much more do I, a sinful person, need to do this?

Thank you, Jesus, for your ever-living words and for the gift of the Holy Bible which reveals details of your life on earth. Thank you for the gift of the Holy Spirit which opens our

hearts and minds to your love, forgiveness, and saving grace. Help me to pray more and more.

Hosea 4:1-10; Psalms 97, 99, 100; Acts 21:1-14

Wednesday, September 30

Luke 5:27-39 *After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. “Follow me,” Jesus said to him, and Levi got up, left everything and followed him.* (vv.27-28)

This tax collector, Levi, is Matthew—who ended up writing one of the four Gospels. Tax collectors were a hated and reviled group of men, generally considered crooks. Whenever the self-righteous Pharisees spoke of tax collectors, they clumped them together with “sinners.” Imagine the Pharisees’ astonishment when they heard that Jesus and disciples had gone to a “great banquet” (v.29) at Levi’s home! They could hardly believe it, and when they questioned the disciples about it, Jesus overheard and made a statement that put the Pharisees in their place.

Jesus made a classic statement that merits pondering. He said, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (vv.31-32). The Pharisees were clueless!

Please forgive me, Lord Jesus, for not associating with those who need to know you. Please make me bolder in sharing you with others.

Hosea 4:11-19; Psalms 101, 109; Acts 21:15-26

Thursday, October 1

Luke 6:1-11 *The Pharisees and the teachers of the law were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal on the Sabbath. But Jesus knew what they were thinking.* (vv.7-8a)

The Pharisees just kept hammering, trying to catch Jesus breaking one of their laws so they could squelch his radical teaching. But they

didn't stand a chance because Jesus always knew what they were thinking and always had an answer that they couldn't refute.

God knows what our thoughts are. That is hard to wrap one's mind around. He knows my thoughts and therefore knows not just my good thoughts, but also the bad ones. Ugh! I am a sinner, and even though I try to walk with the Lord, I still have evil thoughts sometimes. Hopefully, the longer I walk with Him, the good thoughts will continue to increase, and the bad ones will decrease. The trick here is to keep my eyes on Jesus—confessing, repenting, and accepting his forgiveness, love, and compassion.

I thank you, Lord Jesus, that you know me better than I know myself. Thank you for never leaving me, even though my sins hurt you. Thank you for sacrificing your life so that mine might be saved.

Hosea 5:8—6:6; Psalm 105:1-22; Acts 21:27-36

Friday, October 2

Luke 6:12-26 *One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he designated apostles.* (vv.12-13)

Again, Luke tells of Jesus spending time in prayer with his Father. This time it was the entire night! I have a hard time praying for more than five or ten minutes at a time, so I can't begin to comprehend praying all night long. It is noteworthy that the next morning is when he chose his inner circle, the twelve apostles. The footnote in my Bible also says, "Make sure that all your important decisions are grounded in prayer." Good reminder!

I think that *all* my decisions should be grounded in prayer, though in reality they are not. It seems easier to pray longer and harder during my rough times than when my life seems to be going well. There is something about hardship

that sends me to my knees, while I tend to rush through my prayers when things are going well. Often, I forget that the blessings of the good times are an absolute gift from the Lord.

Thank you, Lord, for your infinite patience with me. Teach me to be a better and more frequent "pray-er."

Hosea 10:1-15; Psalm 102; Acts 21:37—22:16

Saturday, October 3

Luke 6:27-38 *"Give and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."* (v.38)

This verse in *The Message* reads, "Give away your life; you'll find life given back, but not merely given back—given back with bonus and blessing. Giving, not getting, is the way. Generosity begets generosity." Food for thought.

Verse 38 could be a banner verse for a stewardship campaign, or a guiding principle in how to live a rewarding life. Whether it's generosity with our resources or with our time, it always holds true that God blesses us when we are generous. Another blessing that occurs when we take time to do something that we know the Lord wants us to do, but maybe we really don't want to do, is that we feel good afterwards—often to our surprise. I think I'm going to be a blessing another person, but I myself come away feeling blessed.

Thank you, Lord, for showing us the blessing of being generous.

Hosea 11:1-9; Psalms 107:33-43, 108; Acts 22:17-29

by Anna Cash

Used with permission from the BIBLE
READING FELLOWSHIP
P. O. Box 380, Winter Park, FL 32790