

# *Good News Daily*

**FEBRUARY 4 – MARCH 3, 2018**

**Volume XVIII**

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**Number 5**

## **Sunday, February 4**

Psalm 96 *Sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth. Sing to the LORD, bless His name; proclaim good tidings of His salvation from day to day.* (v.2 NAS)

What a great verse for a Sunday morning! As we enter our places of worship this verse should be on our minds and hearts. God loves the praise of His people and we have so much for which to be grateful.

Remember how He answered your prayer on Tuesday, how He protected you in that highway incident on Wednesday, how He solved that financial issue for you on Thursday? His mercies are new every morning! That is truly good news. As my young friend says: God is large and in charge.

Thank You, Heavenly Father, for all Your help, blessings, and kindness.

Genesis 24:50-67; Psalm 93; 2 Timothy 2:14-21; Mark 10:13-22

## **Monday, February 5**

Hebrews 13:1-6 *“I will never desert, nor will I ever forsake you.”* (v.5b)

Jesus has promised to be with us always. As the writer of the letter to the Hebrews says, “The Lord is my Helper, I will not be afraid” (v.6). We can go forward in confidence and faith.

The enemy (Satan) is the author of fear; God is the author of trust and hope. As proclaimed in the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm, “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me.” That is truly good news!

Thank you, Jesus, that you are the friend we can always depend upon.

Genesis 25:19-34; Psalm 80; John 7:37-52

## **Tuesday February 6**

Hebrews 13:17-25 *Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us*

*that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen. (vv. 20-21)*

God gives us His grace so we can take Christ-like actions. Loving is not just giving a large gift to a “Go Fund Me” account or writing a big check to your favorite charity. It is also the little acts of kindness: holding the door for a mother pushing a stroller, bringing in the trash cans from the curb for a handicapped person, tossing the newspaper by the front door for a senior citizen, helping load groceries into the car for an elderly gentleman and, for those of you living in a northern climate, cleaning the snow off the sidewalk and driveway of someone who cannot do so themselves.

Open my eyes to see the ways I can serve You and other people, dear Lord.

Genesis 26:1-6, 12-33; Psalm 78:1-39; John 7:53—8:11

### **Wednesday, February 7**

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

Truly God’s word is like a giant flashlight showing us the way through life’s hard decisions—leading us to honesty and integrity, kindness and helpfulness. Many young people wear the WWJD bracelet to remind them to consider what Jesus would do in a tough situation. It’s a good question for all of us to consider.

Too often I jump into a mess with both feet rather than stopping first to pray and search God’s word for direction and guidance. And then perhaps also seeking the counsel of a trusted Christian friend.

Forgive me, Lord, for not seeking Your wisdom before acting. Guide me to do the right thing.

Genesis 27:1-29; Romans 12:1-8; John 8:12-20

### **Thursday, February 8**

Psalm 146 *Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD, O my soul! (v.1)*

The Psalms are full of reminders to praise the Lord: “How blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God., who made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them” (vv.5-6a).

It is important to cultivate the attitude of gratitude. God loves to hear the praises of His people. Each day we need to remember our blessings and give Him thanks. It is so easy to fall into grumbling and complaining, so as an act of our will we need to praise the Lord each morning and all through the day.

Thank You, Lord, that because of You we can sing, pray, and love!  
Genesis 27:30-45; Psalms 83, 147; Romans 12:9-21; John 8:21-32

## **Friday, February 9**

Genesis 27:46—28:4, 10-22 *As he (Jacob) slept, he dreamed of a stairway that reached from earth up to heaven. And he saw the angels of God going up and down the stairway. At the top of the stairway stood the LORD.* (vv.12-13a NLT)

Jacob had cheated his twin brother Esau out of the birthright and in anger Esau vows to kill Jacob. So, Rebekah urges Isaac to send Jacob away to her brother's home to find a wife.

Despite being a cheater, God forgives Jacob and promises to bless him and bring him back to the land promised to Abraham and Isaac. After having the dream in our reading for today, Jacob awakes and says, "Surely the Lord is in this place." He names the place Bethel and promises to give a tenth of all he possesses to God.

We, too, can look back on our lives and see where God has brought us through hardships, health problems, financial issues, and family disputes and given us a second chance. We, too, can say, "Surely the Lord is in this place" and give thanks for His help in times of trouble.

Thank you, Jesus, for rescuing me from my sins and mistakes. Guide me in your ways.

Psalm 88; Romans 13:1-14; John 8:33-47

## **Saturday, February 10**

Psalm 90 *Let Your work appear to Your servants and Your majesty to their children.* (v.16 NAS)

As I am writing these devotions, we are preparing for a massive solar eclipse where the moon will block the sun for a portion of the day. This event helps me again rejoice in the wonderful creation our God has made for us and how the seasons, tides, day and night, and timing of the earth are so precise. I think of Psalm 8: "When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained; what is man that You take thought of him, and the son of man that You care for him? Yet You have made him a little lower than God, and You crown him with glory and majesty!" (vv.3-5).

Thanks, Creator God, for Your marvelous creation.

Genesis 29:1-20; Psalm 87; Romans 14:1-23; John 8:47-59

*by Jacqueline Littleford*

**Sunday, February 11**

Luke 9:18-27 *Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." (v.23 NIV)*

This is the kind of verse that stops me in my tracks. It is a hard saying for me. Peter might have been thinking, "Great! Jesus is the Messiah; the time has come—victory and power are right around the corner." Jesus told him, however, that the divine plan involves sacrifice and service, not power. The disciples had lived with the expectation that the Messiah would be a conquering king who would restore the kingdom. God's plan turned everything upside down—Jesus would suffer, die on a cross, and be raised to life.

If I am honest I have to admit that I often do not deny self, but rely on self. I remember reading once, "Jesus understood that trusting God means non-trust and non-reliance on the security the world offers." The question, "Who do you say I am?" is the sum and substance of making a decision to follow Him as the Lord of my life. The essence of discipleship is humility before God and it begins with denial of self—and that's a challenge for me.

Proverbs 26:1-23; Psalms 148, 149, 150; 2 Corinthians 3:7-18

**Monday, February 12**

Philippians 2:1-13 *If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete, by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. (vv.1-2)*

Many years ago, the Lord laid it on my heart to memorize Paul's Letter to the Philippians. In order not to lose it, I often recite all 107 verses as I'm about my daily tasks, on a road trip to visit my daughter, lying awake in the wee hours of the morning, or with my husband on a train trip into the city. Though Paul's letter was written to the church in Philippi, his words of encouragement and exhortation have spoken to me as an individual many times since I first memorized the letter. When I get off the track of being "like-minded," verses 3 and 4 remind me of my selfishness and need for humility. Paul knew an intimacy with Christ that enabled him to know what it was to "have the same love, being one in spirit and purpose." Paul's entire life found its meaning in Christ. Hiding Philippians in my heart, I am without excuse in knowing how I need to respond to the many circumstances of life within the church and within my daily life.

Proverbs 27:1-6, 10-12; Psalm 25; John 18:15-18, 25-27

## **Tuesday, February 13**

John 18:28-38 *“You are a king, then!” said Pilate. Jesus answered, “You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.” “What is truth?” Pilate asked. With this he went out again to the Jews and said, “I find no basis for a charge against him.”* (vv.37-38)

We have so much deception today in advertising, in manipulation of the truth by the media, and the popular belief that “what is true for one person is not necessarily true for another,” that without a standard we have nothing by which to measure truth. The question for today’s living, I believe, is not what is truth but is there a source of truth and where do I find it? Thanks be to God that in His grace He has not left us alone to make up our own truths! I am so grateful that He is the source of truth and His Word is our standard of measure. Simply put, God’s truth is revealed to us in Jesus (John 14:6) and He has given us the gift of the Spirit of truth to be with us forever (John 14:17). In his Letter to the Thessalonians, Paul urges followers of Christ to “Test everything” (1 Thessalonians 5:21). We must not accept the claims of others without question, but test them to see that they are in agreement with God’s truth.

Proverbs 30:1-4, 24-33; Psalms 26, 28; Philippians 3:1-11

## **Wednesday, February 14**

Hebrews 12:1-14 *Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.* (v.2)

“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus.” These words from Hebrews offer an excellent place to begin our Lenten journey. I recently heard a person offer advice about the game of golf, specifically how it is often won or lost on the greens. He described how important it is to “fix your eyes” first on the hole and then to “fix your eyes” on the ball until the putter makes contact and the ball is on its way to the “target”. Jesus needs to be our “target”. He continues to call us into a deeper and more intimate relationship, yet we realize how easy it is to be distracted and to miss the joy he longs to share with us.

We know what’s ahead as we begin this season of repentance and reflection. Jesus was willing to endure the cross and become “the author and perfecter” of the faith that makes it possible for us to enter into the throne room of God with the assurance that we have a friend sitting at the right hand of the Father.

Amos 5:6-15; Psalms 95, 32, 143; Luke 18:9-14

## **Thursday, February 15**

Habakkuk 3:1-18 *Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior.* (v.18)

It is easy to take our eyes off the Lord and look at our troubles. The evil acts that led to the collapse of the World Trade Center and the death of so many on September 11, 2001 and the tsunami on December 26, 2004 in Southeast Asia, along with all the recent catastrophes around the world, raise the question for us (and especially for those who continue to suffer), “How long, O LORD, must I call for help, but you do not listen?” (Habakkuk 1:2). Is God not listening to my elderly friend’s plea to be free of the daily pain she experiences in her back? As a volunteer at a pregnancy health center, is God not listening to my prayers for women I meet who, even after seeing an ultrasound of their baby, choose to sacrifice their unborn on the altar of selfishness? Just as Habakkuk could not see nor understand all that God was doing, I must rest in the assurance that God is in control of His world and the events of today. My job is to “be joyful in God my Savior.”

Psalm 37:1-18; Philippians 3:12-21; John 17:1-8

## **Friday, February 16**

Philippians 4:1-9 *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.* (vv.6-7)

“I have really exciting news! I’m heading for Ireland in a few days for an 8-day, 690 mile bicycle race with my cycling team!” So began our son’s telephone conversation with us. As a mother of two adult children and grandmother of four beautiful grandchildren, I pray daily for the concerns of our family including the Lord’s protection. It was only natural then, as soon as we ended our phone conversation with our son, to bow my head in prayer asking the Lord’s safe keeping for him and all the other riders participating in the race. I also asked the Lord’s protection for our son’s wife and two young boys while he was away. I prayed too for my own mixed emotions of excitement and anxiety. Thankfully, I know the One I can run to any time anxious thoughts overtake me. The circumstances hadn’t changed—our son was still going to Ireland—but having placed him and his family in our Lord’s hands, my anxiety was replaced with His peace. Thanks be to God!

Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32; Psalms 95, 31; John 17:9-19

## **Saturday, February 17**

Philippians 4:10-20 *And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.* (v.19)

A number of years ago I worked with a small, non-profit agency that matched sister families who wanted to share their friendship and material abundance with families of lesser means. As the families got acquainted and their friendship progressed, it was not uncommon for the helper family to get requests for designer clothing, particularly designer jeans. It was often the children in the family who needed jeans, but they wanted designer jeans.

How much of what we buy today is because we want it or because we need it? In the near future, we will be purchasing a new car. I went to the Internet to get as much information as I could about how we should go about buying our new car. Somewhat to my surprise, one of the first recommendations was to assess not what we wanted in a car, but what we needed.

As I look back over my life, I can see how lovingly God has taken care to provide for my needs and, in many cases, wisely spared me from my wants.

Ezekiel 39:21-29; Psalms 30, 32; John 17:20-26

*by Gail and Jack Potter*

**Volume XVIII**

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**Sunday, February 18**

John 12:44-50 *“I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.”* (v.46 NIV)

Darkness has many meanings—physical darkness as the earth rotates and daylight turns into night. But perhaps even darker than nighttime is a broken, empty soul, destitute and alone. God doesn’t want this for us, His beloved. He sent Jesus, the light of the world, into our midst to give us hope and a future. Wholeness and health is available to us if we surrender ourselves to the One who loves us completely and wants the very best for us.

Look to Psalm 139:11-12 for comfort and reassurance: “If I say, ‘Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,’ even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.” Thanks be to God.

Daniel 9:3-10; Psalms 63, 98; Hebrews 2:10-18

## **Monday, February 19**

Genesis 37:1-11 *Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age, and he made a richly ornamented robe for him. When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him.* (vv.3-4)

Do you have favorites—a team or college, a type of car, a certain brand? I'm sure we all can admit to this. But what about our children? No wonder Joseph's brothers resented him as their father showered their youngest brother with special gifts, attention, and affection. Sibling rivalry is alive and well.

I grew up in a large family, five girls and one boy, born over a 17-year span. Although we are all very different, unconditional love continues to bind us together. My father always called me his favorite—but he specified that I was his “favorite #2 daughter”! He did this for each one of us as well as for all his grandchildren. We were all his favorites, he showed no partiality.

That's how God loves us. We are all His favorites. There is nothing we can do to make Him love us more or less than He already does. His love is our gift, pure grace, undeserved and unearned. Isn't this profound? I am so grateful.

Psalms 41, 52; 1 Corinthians 1:1-19; Mark 1:1-13

## **Tuesday, February 20**

Mark 1:14-28 *The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as teachers of the law.* (v.22)

I have a cynical streak. At times, I've wondered if I would have been in the crowd shouting, “Crucify him! Crucify him!” as Jesus faced Pontius Pilate. I hate to admit that publicly, but those thoughts have been part of my faith journey and they have saddened me at times. Over the years as my walk has deepened, enriched by gifted teachers, priests, and study, I feel more hopeful that I would have been one of Jesus' followers, drawn in and deeply transformed by the profound truths he shared.

Recently, I was privileged to go on a Celtic Pilgrimage to Ireland. One of our stops was Glendalough, a beautiful valley in the Wicklow Mountains and the site of ruins of an ancient monastic city dating back to the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> century. We spent two days there and, on the second morning, were blessed to walk and learn from Fr. Michael Rodgers, a Catholic priest, whose love for this place and our Lord was palpable. His quiet presence and words were mesmerizing, poignant, and almost Christ-like. The experience touched me deeply and continues to do so, creating a hunger to learn more.



Both Fr. Michael and St. Kevin, who lived, loved, and experienced God's presence here centuries ago, only magnify for me how those early Christians must have felt as they listened to Jesus. He taught with authority, with wisdom, with such insight and truth. They were awed and amazed. I think I've had a taste of how special and life-changing hearing Jesus firsthand must have been...enough to melt this cynic's heart and warm her soul to the truth that Jesus is the way to abundant life.

Genesis 37:12-24; Psalm 45; 1 Corinthians 1:20-31

### **Wednesday, February 21**

Mark 1:29-45 *A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean." Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man, "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!"* (vv.40-41)

When the leper approaches Jesus desperately wanting to be healed, he says, "If you are willing, you can make me clean." Jesus is always willing but are *we* willing to ask for help, for healing, for wholeness?

So many times, we fail to ask—sometimes feeling unworthy, other times simply not asking. Our Lord wants the best for all of us, always. He is for us, not against us. He loves us totally and completely. We are part of His creation made in His image. It can be humbling to ask for help, but also the beginning of a new and deeper relationship with God.

For many years I've attended a weekly healing service at my church, truly a gift to myself. I've learned firsthand that God wants us to be whole in body, mind, and spirit. He tells us, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). Our part of the relationship is to ask for help, to go to Him. God so loved the world and we are part of that world for which He sent His only Son, Jesus.

Thank You, Lord, for such sacrificial love.

Genesis 37:25-36; Psalm 119:49-72; 1 Corinthians 2:1-13

### **Thursday, February 22**

Mark 2:1-12 *When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."* (v.5)

Forgiveness is essential to healing. It's the key. It does not mean you condone the wrongs that were done or that you are saying the wrongful behavior was okay. Forgiveness does, however, allow you to put those wrongs in their place, give them to God, and move on. It gives you freedom to live in the present moment, to experience joy and peace again, to anticipate the future.

It saddens me when I see people who refuse to forgive, who become bitter and joyless. Please, if you are struggling with unforgiveness, seek help. Ask God to help break your heart of stone so that healing can begin. It is a gift to yourself, to those who love you, but, more importantly, you are following Jesus' own words in the Lord's Prayer to "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."

Thank You, Lord, for helping me experience personally the power of forgiveness, the freedom and the healing it brings.

Genesis 39:1-23; Psalm 50; 1 Corinthians 2:14—3:15

### **Friday, February 23**

Psalm 40 *Many, O LORD, my God, are the wonders you have done. The things you planned for us no one can recount to you; were I to speak and tell of them, they would be too many to declare.* (v.5)

Gratitude, a full heart, a sense of peace and profound joy, seeing the world in high definition, full of color, detail, wonder, and beauty.

This is how I feel having recently returned from my Celtic Pilgrimage to Ireland and Scotland with a special group of people from the parish in which I grew up. It was in that church where the seeds of my faith were planted and nurtured so long ago, allowing them to develop the deep roots that today anchor my life. It's humbling but wonderful to visit sites thousands of years old where people of faith journeyed, worshiped, and gathered, seeing God's hand in all creation. I felt so small, realizing what a speck my life is when considering the vastness of human history, but also appreciating the gift of life each of us is given.

The lesson to live each day well with a full and grateful heart was reaffirmed once again.

Genesis 40:1-23; Psalm 54; 1 Corinthians 3:16-23; Mark 2:13-22

### **Saturday, February 24**

Mark 2:23—3:6 *He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored.* (v.5)

Anger, disappointment, frustration—very human emotions that our Lord Jesus also experienced. He was deeply distressed with the Pharisees who were so consumed with their rules of law that they missed the rule of love. They missed the point completely, failing to see that this man whose hand was shriveled, useless, and deformed had been healed. What a miracle. This should have been time to rejoice.

As humans, we experience many emotions, but we see only a portion of the big picture. We know "in part" but God knows fully. He is the

author of everything, all of creation. Please ponder this again from Genesis 1:31: On the sixth day “God saw all that he had made, and it was a very good.” Truly God loves us totally and completely, all the time, and wants the very best for each of us. Where can you find a better offer than following Jesus Christ who already knows and loves you just as you are? You are enough, you are worthy, and you are deeply loved. Thank You, God.

Genesis 41:1-13; Psalm 55; 1 Corinthians 4:1-7

**Volume XVIII**

**February 25-March 3, 2018**

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**Sunday, February 25**

Psalms 29 *The voice of the Lord is powerful, the voice of the Lord is majestic. The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars....* (vv.4-5a NAS)

As a certified arborist, I have sat in on many safety seminars, most recently one on electrical hazard. While covering the obvious benefits we derive from electricity, the speaker also came loaded with graphic material. One video showed how easily tools can be destroyed by being placed too close to a transformer, another documented aspen trees spontaneously catching fire from nearby power lines and, of course, there was heartbreaking coverage of worker fatalities.

The intent of the seminar was not to be a gruesome horror show but, rather, to promote a sober respect for an unusual power. In today’s reading the psalmist marvels at the majesty but also the power of the sheer *voice* of God that is able to break cedar trees *into pieces*.

Both the seminar and today’s Scripture remind me of my conversion. While it was full of indescribable grace, unexpected wonder, and joy there was also a point in my epiphany in which the experience was so powerful I actually had to pull away.

Genesis 41:14-45; Psalm 24; Romans 6:3-14; John 5:19-24

**Monday, February 26**

1 Corinthians 4:8-21 *...when we are reviled, we bless...* (v.12b)

By all accounts, Paul is taking direct cues from Christ in today’s reading. It’s the new rule. Not only are we commanded to turn the other cheek, we are ordered to love people who hate us and, in this case, those who *revile* or “spit insulting words” at us.

In 2016, America endured one of the most vitriol presidential campaigns in history. Towards the end, some anticipated physical violence between the candidates. Debates normally leave people fired up. These left

people nauseated. From a studio audience came the last question of one debate: “Can you tell us one thing you *like* about your opponent?” As the candidates slowly answered, I have to admit, an astonishing calm came over me—like Pepto-Bismol to a frothing stomach.

Returning insults with blessings is a tough one. It demands all our pride. It jerks our natural instincts in reverse. But it is the end of all wars and is the ultimate elixir. When Christ forgave those set to kill him, he left this indelible example—and its unexpected rewards.

Genesis 41:46-57; Psalms 56, 57, 58; Mark 3:7-19a

## **Tuesday, February 27**

Mark 3:19b-35 “...*whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness...*” (v.29)

As a teenager, I thought this was the scariest quote of the Bible. What if I do this in my sleep? What if I mistakenly do this? What if I do this unawares? I was haunted. Apparently, I wasn’t the only one. Pastors throughout my life vaguely described it. Many avoided the subject altogether.

Finally, a couple years ago I heard a priest state, “We don’t really know what it is.” Crying out loud, I thought. Doesn’t anyone have a dictionary?! So, I looked.

Vines derives blasphemy from *blapto* = to injure, and *pheme* = speech. Strong’s Concordance calls it *scurrilous language* that is *defamatory*. Okay, so when an angry divorced parent bad-mouths their ex in front of the kids, that’s blasphemy. In a word, slander.

We blaspheme all the time—and can be forgiven. But when the Holy Spirit healed a withered hand on the Sabbath day and the scribes called it Satanic, that was unforgiveable defamation—something you and I are not likely to commit in our sleep!

Genesis 42:1-17; Psalms 61, 62; 1 Corinthians 5:1-8

## **Wednesday, February 28**

1 Corinthians 5:9—6:8 *Actually then, it is already a defeat for you, that you have lawsuits with one another. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded?* (v.7)

There is a saying, “The more things change the more they stay the same.” In the early 80’s I completed my Bachelor of Arts degree at a well-known northwest Christian university. Just after my graduation, the university found itself embroiled in a lawsuit against a Catholic applying for a warehouseman position. The school argued the right to decline the position to a “non-evangelical” given the university was a private institution.

The fact that the university was a *Christian* university—supposedly full of mercy and good fruits—was, apparently, entirely beside the point.

Do we measure ourselves by the world's virtues or by Christ's? Do I do that? Probably more than I should. Were the early Roman Christians more Roman or Christian? Are we more American or Christian? Every generation seems to be challenged to fully realize this *new* testament of faith.

The jury is still out with my alma mater. I sent my diploma back to the school telling them I would take it back when they withdrew their lawsuit. That was 1982. Still no word!

Genesis 42:18-28; Psalm 72; Mark 4:1-20

### **Thursday, March 1**

Genesis 42:29-38 *"But we said to him, 'We are honest men; we are not spies.'"* (v.31)

While some argue Joseph's ulterior motives for lying were justified in today's reading, the story, nevertheless, captures the eventual torment of mendacity.

As a young man, I took on managing a large private estate. I recall working tirelessly into the night, six days a week, coordinating endless garden tours, all during ruthless 80-degree weather. Out of the blue, a house sitter wrote my employer accusing me of scandalous behavior.

I was dizzy with emotion. Exhaustion. Disbelief. Confusion. Helplessness. Anger. After a heated phone call to my vacationing employer, the woman was sent packing within 24 hours. We later learned of her subsequent bouts with mental illness.

What haunted me was that, although my employer was convinced of my innocence, I realized there was nothing I could do to prevent her from later wondering if, just maybe, the house sitter was right. I learned that day the true evil of mendacity is not just its injury but its wicked shelf life.

Psalms 70, 71; 1 Corinthians 6:12-30; Mark 4:21-34

### **Friday, March 2**

1 Corinthians 7:1-9 *But because of immoralities, let each man have his own wife and let each woman have her own husband.* (v.2)

I often wonder what makes a marriage holy. Paul seems to be suggesting here that it is not likely carnal behavior—in and of itself, anyway. When I was 11, my friend told me about the birds and the bees while walking home from school. He's crazy, I thought. My parents would never do anything so disgusting to each other.

Today, societies are grappling with *gay* marriage. A fundamental question is that of *preferential* carnal behavior.

I have a parable. A man owns a famous farm, raising the best stallions and the best mules. Hours before guests arrive; his prize stallion and award-winning mule escape and romp in muddy fields. They return filthy top to bottom. The question is, which was more unclean the stallion or the mule?

If carnal behavior is present in *gay* unions but also in straight unions, what is it that makes *any* union holy? Turns out I was very lucky with my “disgusting” parents. What made their union so special? Well, I suppose, aside from their carnal behavior—just about everything.

Genesis 43:1-15; Psalm 69; Mark 4:35-41

### **Saturday, March 3**

Genesis 43:16-34 ...*the Egyptians could not eat...with the Hebrews, for that is loathsome to the Egyptians.* (v.32b)

While scholars debate the origins of today’s reading, the truth is discrimination is found everywhere—in every age, in every society. “Loathsome” here is also translated “abomination,” which simply means “abhorrence” and is something that occurs in every school yard in America.

Recently, third grader Gabrielle Vaughn of Harrisonville Elementary School championed the so-called buddy bench with a caption that reads “A friend is only a seat away.” The bench is dedicated to lonely students looking for a seat—and a friend.

What can be seen as a tender childlike gesture was more dramatically portrayed at the peak of the crucifixion when the sky turned black, and the earth shook, and the Temple veil tore in half—abolishing divine discrimination once and for all.

If Christ died for all and made redemption available to all and forgave all, who am I to ever restore discrimination except by thoroughly degrading the crucifixion?

Psalms 75, 76; 1 Corinthians 7:10-24; Mark 5:1-20

*by William Bacon*

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