

Good News Daily

Volume XVIII

July 1-7, 2018

Number 26

Sunday, July 1

Acts 17:12-34 *“Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you.”* (vv.22a-23 NIV)

This whole passage from Acts shows Paul’s great courage and his God-given wisdom, as he is brought before the intellectually elite group of men, known as the Areopagus, who were something like a Supreme Court of Athens. Athenians were always interested in hearing about new ideas, and some of the local philosophers had heard Paul preach the good news about Jesus and his resurrection. Disputing his teaching, and exasperated with him, they brought Paul to present this “new idea” to the Areopagus.

Paul begins his address with a compliment, then briefly summarizes what he has observed of their worship patterns. The fact that they worshiped many gods, including one “unknown god” opens the door for him to proclaim, “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands.” Paul clearly laid out the gospel, and when he had finished, some sneered, some wanted to hear more, and, “a few men became followers of Paul and believed.” (v.34)

Lord, help us to be unafraid to share the gospel with scoffers and non-believers, and even the “religious” people who have missed the truth. By sharing, we might just be saving others’ lives.

Numbers 21:4-9, 21-35; Psalm 118; Luke 13:10-17

Monday, July 2

Matthew 21:12-22 *“If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.”* (v.22)

Does this verse mean that if I believe in Jesus I can get all my prayers answered the way I want them answered? Does it imply that I can tell God what I want/need, and if I believe He has the power to get it for me, He will? Is this some sort of magical formula: believe, pray, ask, and receive exactly what you’ve asked for? Would I be truly happy if God were simply the “great Santa Claus in the sky?”

Absolutely not! If this were the way God and prayer worked, He would simply be rewarding and encouraging selfishness, pridefulness, and lust. The Bible clearly teaches the opposite. God rewards the humble, not the self-centered. Peter, in 1 Peter 5:5, quotes Proverbs 3:34 when he writes, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

Being humble implies total trust and complete submission to the God who loves us so much that He willingly sent His one and only Son to die on the

cross as a sacrifice for my sins, so that by his resurrection I may be forgiven, redeemed, and receive eternal life. Wanting anything less than this is foolish.

Dear Lord, thank You for forgiving me when I act selfishly, and please teach me humility as You deepen my faith.

Numbers 22:1-21; Psalm 106:1-18; Romans 6:12-23

Tuesday, July 3

Psalm 121 *He will not let your foot slip—he who watches over you will not slumber; indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.* (vv.3-4)

I am a very blessed woman who has been privileged to raise three wonderful children who have, in turn, blessed me with the joy of eight terrific grandchildren. So when I read Psalm 121, it brought back memories of “watching over” my children...when they were sick, rocking a feverish child back to sleep in the middle of the night; bathing and then changing crib sheets for babies with upset tummies when their cries woke me during the night; fumbling to the kitchen in the dark house to prepare a bottle for a sobbing infant; getting out of bed to get some aspirin to lessen the pain of a child’s broken arm when they awoke hours before dawn.

Like all dutiful mothers, I lost my share of sleep; but it was such a small sacrifice when compared to the joys my children have brought me. I lived with a bit of sleep deprivation for a few years because I loved them so much, and it was my job to take care of them. However, my motherly love does not even begin to approach the depth and power of God’s love for all his children.

Think about the verse above and just picture our God who *never* goes to sleep because He is *always* watching over us. Wow!

Numbers 22:21-38; Psalms 120, 122, 123; Romans 7:1-12; Matthew 21:23-32

Wednesday, July 4

Matthew 21:33-46 *When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus’ parables, they knew he was talking about them.* (v.45)

In this passage Jesus tells the “Parable of the wicked Tenants,” or as *The Message* calls it, “The Story of the Greedy Farmhands.” The chief priests and the Pharisees must have listened to Jesus fairly attentively because they definitely figured out that they themselves were indeed the “wicked tenants” in this story, and were the ones who had disobeyed God and would soon be responsible for plotting to kill the Vineyard Owner’s son.

The sad thing to me about these leaders is that they professed to know everything about God, His laws, the prophets who had preceded Jesus...they had the Torah, the Psalms, and the story of God’s people from creation to that present day. And still they failed to recognize that Jesus was the fulfillment of all that God had predicted and promised. They had the Messiah himself, to whom all the Scriptures pointed all through their Bible, and yet they were completely blind to the truth and considered this Jesus a rebel, a troublemaker, and a threat to their way of life and their control over the people of Israel.

We know that no one can accept and believe that Jesus is who he professes to be unless the Holy Spirit has opened the eyes of their hearts. I pray, Father that You would open the eyes of all who are blind, and keep my eyes open and focused on You so that I may continue to see You more fully each day.

Numbers 22:41—23:12; Psalm 119:145-176; Romans 7:13-25

Thursday, July 5

Romans 8:1-11 *The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.* (vv.6-7)

Paul wrote this masterful letter to the Christians of Rome before he actually visited Rome. Neither Paul nor any of the apostles had yet been to Rome, and apparently the church there had been started by Jews who had become believers while in Jerusalem during Pentecost. In this letter, Paul lays out a highly organized, logical statement of his faith, explaining the facts of the gospel, the foundations of the faith, sin, salvation, forgiveness, the law, and grace. The latter chapters of Paul's letter to the Romans deal with personal responsibilities and practical teaching on how to live as a Christian in a hostile world.

Paul shows us that we have a choice in life: we can allow our minds to be ruled, dominated, and controlled either by sin or by God's Holy Spirit. The effects of each choice are clear. Sin results in death (on many levels), but the Spirit-led mind results in (eternal) life, and lasting peace. There is no such peace unless we submit ourselves to God and obey Him only. When we come to faith in Jesus, God gives us the Holy Spirit and it is only through the power of that Spirit that we are enabled to be obedient and to attain a peaceful life.

Thank You, gracious Lord, that You are ever ready to help us choose rightly and to keep us on the path of righteousness.

Numbers 23:11-26; Psalms 131, 132, 133; Matthew 22:1-14

Friday, July 6

Romans 8:12-17 *For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of Sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."* (v.15)

God's incredible gift to all true believers, the Holy Spirit, is described here as a spirit of sonship that enables us to have an intimate relationship with God the Father. The word, "abba," is the Aramaic word for "father," and is sometimes translated as "Daddy." The Romans reading Paul's letter would immediately make the connection that now our "daddy" will care for, love, and protect us, so that fear has no place in our lives if we believe and trust our Daddy.

In Paul's second letter to Timothy, 1:7, he writes, "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity (some translations use "fear" in place of "timidity"), but a spirit of power, of love, and of self-discipline." I had been a fearful person

since childhood, but I hid this flaw from most people and tried to conquer my fears through my own determination and self-will. However, despite how strong I (and many others) thought I was, I just couldn't keep fear out of my life, and thankfully, in time I came to believe the Scripture and trust that God's Holy Spirit working in me could banish fear, and he did! Yes, there are still times when fear begins to creep into my thoughts, but *if* I call on the power of the Spirit, he dissolves it. What a great miracle for me!

Thank You, most gracious Lord, for this great gift You have given to all believers. Help us to not forget to call on the Spirit in any time of need.

Numbers 24:1-13; Psalms 140, 142; Matthew 22:15-22

Saturday, July 7

Matthew 22:23-40 *Jesus replied, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."* (vv.37-40)

The Pharisees never stopped trying to discredit Jesus, and this reply was in answer to a question they had asked to "test" him: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" They likely had assumed that whatever answer Jesus gave, they could find a way to find fault with it. Scripture doesn't record their reaction to this answer. The very next verse of Matthew tells us that then Jesus began to ask them some questions, and finally they were unable to answer Him: "and from that day on no one dared to ask him any more questions." (v.46)

I have pondered the above quoted verses and have come to understand what an absolutely brilliant response Jesus gave. If we do, indeed, love God in this deep, "full-on" totally committed fashion, and *if* we truly love others as ourselves, we will therefore be keeping all the other commandments, or "laws."

Oh, precious Lord, help us to love as You have loved us.

Numbers 24:12-25; Psalms 137, 144; Romans 8:18-25

by Anna Cash

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Sunday, July 8

Mark 1:14-20 *“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”* (v.15 ESV)

In the U.S. we have some trouble understanding the notions of monarchy and kingship which are frequently used in the Bible. This is unfortunate. Not because we necessarily should have an earthly king, but because we miss the power and the joy assumed by the announcement of the arrival of God’s kingdom.

This is an announcement of victory and fulfillment. This kingdom represents the dominion of God, not bound by geography and not thwarted by mankind’s disobedience. While earthly kings and rulers may falter and fail, the ruler of this kingdom is steady and sure. This Lord loves his people and longs to be known and followed by them.

The coming of this kingdom demands a response. We cannot sit on the fence! The coming of the righteous kingdom demands a turning away from all things that are not part of this kingdom. We cannot remain unchanged by this announcement. Jesus calls us to believe, to stand in deep faith. This is not a one-time action, but a continuous action which involves trust in the facts about the King, the kingdom, and letting that shape one’s life. It is *good news*.

Numbers 27:12-23; Psalms 146, 147; Acts 19:11-20

Monday, July 9

Romans 8:26-30 *The Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.* (v.27b)

Does it seem your days are marked with weakness and frustration? Does your hope wane in the turbulence of life? Do your prayers seem hollow and empty? If any or all of these describe you, then exhale a sigh of relief. The Spirit is praying for you (v.26) and God’s will is set on bringing you home.

The will of God is directed at your future, but is not limited to it. Remember, the kingdom is now! Nothing can snatch the future of the Christian from its moorings. Trouble, calamity, and heartbreak may steal our joy, but they cannot steal our hope and status before God. Why? Because God’s desire, His will, is for you to be like Jesus. If you’re following Him, it’s because *He* called you to begin with and made restoration with Him possible.

You’re headed for glory and because that, too, is God’s will, Paul speaks as if it already has happened (v.30). When it is God’s will, it’s as

good as done. Our job, as Paul says earlier in Romans, is that we “present [ourselves] to God as those who have been bought from death to life” (6:13b). What a life it is!

Numbers 32:1-6, 16-27; Psalms 1, 2, 3; Matthew 23:1-12

Tuesday, July 10

Psalm 5 *Give ear to my words, O LORD; consider my groaning. Give attention to the sound of my cry, my King and my God, for to you do I pray.* (vv.1-2)

I imagine that as you read the Psalms for today you may have nodded in understanding. I did. Perhaps you, like me, have prayed through tears and through anger, wondering why God seems so far away?

No one can deny those times—they are part of the reality of life. The key is that there is a resolve. The psalmist gains perspective by reviewing the truth. God is still God. We serve a righteous God whose rule, whose kingdom, is established and ultimately all things find their resolve in Him.

On the cross, Jesus felt our agony when he cried out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46b). Not only is God’s rule established, but we serve a God who did not distance himself from our pain, but chose to experience it. Therefore, like the psalmist we can confidently cry, “But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them ever sing for joy, and spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may exult in you” (v.11). He is nearer and more compassionate than we imagine.

Numbers 35:1-3, 9-15, 30-34; Psalm 6; Romans 8:31-39; Matthew 23:13-26

Wednesday, July 11

Matthew 23:27-39 *“So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.”* (v.28)

Hypocrisy does untold damage. Jesus knew that hypocrisy was deadly to people’s faith and in today’s passage he charges the leaders with this grievous sin.

Hypocrisy is dangerous on a number of levels. First it is deceptive to others. When we are hypocritical we are living a lie. When we are hypocritical, what people see is not the truth but a mask. It is an inauthentic witness and sooner or later an observable one that brings discredit on the Lord we serve.

Secondly, hypocrisy is dangerous because it is a lie we tell ourselves. We can fool ourselves into thinking that the only thing that matters is our external life—only that which is seen by others. This is not true. The change wrought by Jesus in the life of the believer is geared

toward the heart and mind as today's passage points out. We, too, can look good on the outside and inside be full of "dead people's bones" (v.27).

We are called to an authentic faith which, because of the deep change in our heart and mind, brings about a change in living and relating to the world. May we seek the internal change—the harder road—that we may not be found deceiving others or ourselves.

Deuteronomy 1:1-18; Psalm 119:1-24; Romans 9:1-18

Thursday, July 12

Deuteronomy 3:18-28 *"You shall not fear them, for it is the LORD your God who fights for you."* (v.22)

Deuteronomy means "second law" and is the retelling of the deliverance of Israel and the years leading up to their entering the Promised Land. This book, told through the voice of Moses, recaps the events found in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. And in chapter 3 we see Moses reminding the people of an important habit they must cultivate—trust.

The people are preparing to enter into the Promised Land; their sojourn in the desert is almost over. Despite their miraculous deliverance from Egypt, despite the bread from heaven, despite the victorious battles they have just come through, they're worried and afraid. Their fear had been so strong when they first saw the land and its occupants, they refused to enter. The Lord punished them by declaring that none of those who came from Egypt would see the Promised Land. Only one of that generation, Caleb, who tried to convince Israel to take the land as the Lord had directed, would indeed enter it (Numbers 13:26—14:24).

The commandment most repeated in Scripture is "do not fear." How often, despite what we have experienced and known about our God, do we continue to fear? Remember whose you are and what He has done!

Psalm 18:1-20; Romans 9:19-33; Matthew 24:1-14

Friday, July 13

Romans 10:1-13 *For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.* (v.10)

In many circles the word "saved" has been so overused it has lost some its original spark. But it is an accurate word to describe the effect of Jesus on our lives. Christ is literally the difference between life and death. And until we come to the point of realizing our "deadness" prior to our encounter with him, we will never be comfortable with acknowledging that Jesus has indeed "saved" us.

He has saved us from our nagging and guilty consciences, from our fear of death, and from our fear—dare I say—of living. For our lives can be very scary and difficult. Sometimes nothing seems capable of alleviating our pain or frustration or filling in the sense of pessimism that we feel. The one

that calls on Jesus is indeed saved. When we confess Jesus is Lord, as Paul suggests today, we acknowledge that we are not in control and don't have all the answers. Then we believe and trust in the utter truthfulness of the power and love of God that sent Jesus to redeem us. Being "saved" is a gift open to all. Have you accepted it? Are you accepting each day?

Deuteronomy 31:7-13, 24—32:4; Psalms 16, 17; Matthew 24:15-31

Saturday, July 14

Matthew 24:32-51 *"Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."* (v.44)

To talk about the 2nd coming of Christ is to risk being looked on as a wild-eyed fanatic. But nothing should be more natural to the Christian. The return of Jesus is meant to be a comfort to the Church. It is an assurance that we are not alone, that God is not unconcerned about us and is planning to return for us.

Verse 36 should draw us away from being overly concerned with predictions about when it will happen. "No one knows, not even the angel," Jesus said. Even though God has revealed a great deal to us, including His love, His mercy, His justice, and His son, He has not given us the specifics about the end.

This is a great blessing because it awakens hope in our hearts by reminding us of a very important principle: the fact that God has begun a work is the assurance He will complete it. The fact of Christ's incarnation is the guarantee of his return. Max Lucado comments, from *When Christ Comes*, "For the Christian, the return of Christ is not a riddle to be solved or a code to be broken, but a day to be anticipated." May we live in joyful preparation for that day.

Deuteronomy 34:1-12; Psalms 20, 21; Romans 10:14-21

by Chris Findley

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Sunday, July 15

Mark 1:21-27 *Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit.* (v.23 NSRV)

Do you ever feel an unclean spirit is inside you? Have you acted in a way that is self-destructive? Have you made rash decisions that in hindsight weren't the best choices for your well-being?

We face many decisions on a daily basis that present opportunities to help or hurt our well-being and our relationship with God and each other. A wise priest gave a sermon during Lent suggesting that we ask ourselves, "What would it look like if I did x today instead of y?" I have found this approach very helpful in that it keeps me from getting bogged down in condemning myself for past behavior and it allows me to open the door to a new way of doing things. It may be a way for us to expel the unclean spirit and try a better way.

Joshua 1:1-18; Psalms 148, 149, 150; Acts 21:3-15

Monday, July 16

Matthew 25:1-13 *"Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour."* (v.13)

As I write this the cleanup from Hurricane Irma continues in Florida. Some of us experienced no loss of power and some of us were without it for over a week. The St. John's River was visibly rising even though some weather authorities said it had crested. Three weeks after Irma, Central Florida counties are still seeing flooding occurring; indeed, there are flood warnings all the way up to Jacksonville, at the mouth of the river. Experts made predictions, but the hurricane showed them to be "weather-guessers". I am reminded that I can do my best to prepare, but I know not what will come to pass.

Joshua 2:1-14; Psalm 25; Romans 11:1-12

Tuesday, July 17

Romans 11:13-24 *That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand only through faith. So do not become proud, but stand in awe.* (v.20)

Isn't that the truth? That we stand, live, and breathe through faith. Let me not be haughty, as Paul admonishes, "but stand in awe."

The October 9, 2016 *Parade* magazine had on its title page "AWE," subtitled, "How the soul-stirring wonder sparked by a shooting star or a

majestic peak can transform your health and happiness.” There was no mention of the Creator of this natural beauty in the article inside.

Let me not forget the source of life and all that is good in it, and let me offer thanks and gratitude to the Lord.

Joshua 2:15-24; Psalms 26, 28; Matthew 25:14-30

Wednesday, July 18

Joshua 3:1-13 *The LORD said to Joshua, “This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, so that they may know that I will be with you as I was with Moses.”* (v.7)

I am struck by the idea of the Lord making promises to Joshua. In daily life, it is usually us humans making promises to the Lord. Promises to do better, try harder, wherever we have fallen short. This passage shakes me awake at the strangeness of it. Then I remember, the Lord has made promises to me, too. For example, when I have sinned, if I confess and seek forgiveness, I shall be forgiven. That’s pretty remarkable, too.

Psalm 38; Romans 11:25-36; Matthew 25:31-46

Thursday, July 19

Romans 12:1-8 *For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another.* (vv.4-5)

This verse brings back fond memories of the parish mission I attended years ago. This verse put to music in the hymn “One Bread, One Body” was a favorite for communion and we sang it often. The congregation welcomed my husband and me and knew my son before he was born. This hymn goes through my head to my heart and feels like love.

Joshua 3:14—4:7; Psalm 37:1-18; Matthew 26:1-16

Friday, July 20

Joshua 4:19—5:1, 10-15 *And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped, and he said to him, “What do you command your servant, my lord?” The commander of the army of the LORD said to Joshua, “Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy.” And Joshua did so.* (vv.14b-15)

Do you have places where you feel you are in the presence of holiness? I feel this often at our church. I may have rushed to get out of the house, through traffic, and searched for a parking place to get to worship service. I find that once there I quickly settle in and take a deep breath. I feel the day’s tensions melt away as I participate in the liturgy and welcome the beauty of God’s glory.

Psalm 31; Romans 12:9-21; Matthew 26:17-25

Saturday, July 21

Joshua 6:1-14 *To the people Joshua gave this command: “You shall not shout or let your voice be heard, nor shall you utter a word, until the day I tell you to shout. Then you shall shout.”* (v.10)

Joshua gives his people specific instructions which must have been difficult to follow, but were followed with great results.

At a parent-teacher conference, one of my child’s elementary school teachers answered my question, “What is the most important skill my child should master?” Her reply was, “How to follow instructions.”

Our Holy Bible is full of instructions on how we should best live our lives. I can work on following the Lord’s instructions for my life today. He promises great results.

Psalms 30, 32; Romans 13:1-7; Matthew 26:26-35

by Anne Robinson

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Sunday, July 22

Joshua 6:15-27 *Suddenly, the walls of Jericho collapsed, and the Israelites charged straight into the town and captured it.* (v.20b NLT).

Joshua and Caleb were among the twelve scouts Moses sent to check out the Promised Land. Ten of the scouts came back in fear saying, “The land is inhabited by giants.” Joshua and Caleb came back saying the Lord will help us conquer this wonderful land of “milk and honey.”

The leadership of Israel has now passed to Joshua. After crossing the Jordan River, they needed to take the strong city of Jericho. God gave Joshua His plan: the Israelite army is to march around Jericho once a day for seven days with seven priests walking ahead of the Ark of the Covenant, carrying a ram’s horn. On the seventh day the people are to march around the city seven times. When the priests give one long blast on the horns all the people are to give a mighty shout (which they did) and the walls came tumbling down! Doubters will say it was an earthquake or a tornado, but our God is the Creator of all nature as well, so no matter how He chose to do it, the walls of Jericho came down!

But notice how Joshua and the people had to obey the Lord’s specific instructions. Following God’s rules works! Dear Lord, help us obey You even when the world thinks what we are doing is strange.

Psalms 63, 98; Acts 22:30—23:11; Mark 2:1-12

Monday, July 23

Joshua 7:1-13 *But Israel was unfaithful concerning the things set apart for the LORD.* (v.1).

When Jericho was destroyed, God commanded that only the silver, gold, bronze, and iron items were to be saved, and they were to be brought to the Lord’s treasury. Achan and his family stole some of these items and hid them under their tent, and then lied about what they had done. When Israel attacked the next small city of Ai they were soundly defeated. When Joshua cried out to the Lord, he was informed that Israel had sinned and broken the covenant, so the whole nation had to be punished.

Are we withholding our time, talent, and treasure from the Lord? Is there a Sunday School teacher needed in your church? Does the choir need more altos or tenors? Have we been faithful in our pledge? Do some elderly members need a ride to church? Remember that we are blessed in order to be a blessing to others. May God not have to punish us because we have been unfaithful about the gifts He has given us to share with others. Dear

Lord, forgive my unfaithfulness and help me always share what You have given me.

Psalms 41, 52; Romans 13:8-14; Matthew 26:36-46

Tuesday, July 24

Joshua 8:1-22 *Then the LORD said to Joshua, “Do not be afraid or discouraged.”* (v.1a)

After Israel repented, Joshua (whose name means “God saves”) again led the Israelite army against the city of Ai and God gave them a resounding victory.

Our Heavenly Father is the God of the Second Chance. Over and over He gives us chances to repent and reclaim His blessings just as He did for the people of Israel. He is the Redeemer God who can bring good out of our mistakes and fumbles. He forgives our sin and heals us. He gives new opportunities and takes away the remembrance of our failures as far as the east is from the west.

With our news reports full of wars, economic problems, health concerns, accidents, and scandals we can take comfort in the Lord’s words to Joshua: “Do not be afraid or discouraged.” God is still in control, even though we live in a fallen world. He is still the Redeemer God in the 21st century. 1 Peter 5:7 reminds us to give all our worries and cares to God, for He cares about what happens to us. Thank You, Lord, for redeeming and giving the second chance.

Psalm 45; Romans 14:1-12; Matthew 26:47-56

Wednesday, July 25

Joshua 8:30-35 *Then Joshua built an altar to the Lord...for blessing the people of Israel.* (vv.30, 33).

The altar is such a focal point for worship. It almost always has a cross at the center, reminding us of Jesus paying the price for our sin. It usually has candles symbolizing Jesus the light of the world. From it is served the bread and cup of the Holy Communion, giving us a foretaste of the heavenly banquet. On it we place our tithes and offerings. From it our pastor or priest proclaims God’s blessing.

Symbols are important in our faith: The Christmas wreaths reminding us of God's love that is everlasting, it has no beginning and no end. The Christmas lights that, again, remind us of Jesus the light to our dark world. The evergreens that remind us of everlasting life with our Heavenly Father. The liturgical colors: red representing Jesus' shed blood, purple for the penitential seasons of Lent and Advent, white for purity, green for growth. And the beautiful stained-glass windows with the images of the saints, which the little Sunday School child described as "the people the light shines through!" Dear Jesus, may your light shine through me.

Psalm 119:49-72; Romans 14:13-23; Matthew 26:57-68

Thursday, July 26

Joshua 9:3-21 *So the Israelite leaders examined their [the Gibeonites'] bread, but they did not consult the LORD.* (v.14).

When the Gibeonites heard about Joshua and the Israelite victories at Jericho and Ai, they devised a plan to deceive Israel into signing a peace treaty with them. They sent their ambassadors in ragged clothes and worn out sandals. They used weathered saddlebags on their donkeys and old patched wineskins. They took dry, moldy bread and pretended to be from a very distant country.

Joshua and the Israelites did not pray about their decision, and signed a peace treaty with a binding oath. Three days later the true facts came out—the Gibeonites were a nearby nation. Because of the treaty, Israel did not destroy them, but did require them to become Israel's servants. They had to chop wood and carry water for the tabernacle (at least they could hear about God while they worked).

How many times have we made a big decision and not consulted the Lord? How many times have we been deceived into sin? (No one will know. It won't hurt anybody. Everyone is doing it.) Forgive us, Lord, for not consulting You on our decisions and protect us from being deceived into sin.

Psalm 50; Romans 15:1-13; Matthew 26:69-75

Friday, July 27

Joshua 9:22—10:15 *So the sun and moon stood still until the Israelites had defeated their enemies.* (v.13a)

Joshua is no doubt recording a miracle rather than a natural phenomenon. Our God, who created the universe and set in place the laws of nature, could also suspend those laws for His purposes even if we wonder how the earth could stop its rotation. Verses 13b-14a say, "The sun stopped in the middle of the sky and did not set as on a normal day. Never before or since has there been a day like that one, when the Lord answered such a request from a human being."

At our healing service, we have had many people needing surgery for cancer who, after much prayer, report to the hospital for another scan before surgery and find the tumor gone. Unbelievers say, “The imaging device must not have been working the day of the first exam.” Believers just praise the Lord! Thank You, Lord, that You are the God of miracles.

Psalms 40, 54; Romans 15:14-24; Matthew 27:1-10

Saturday, July 28

Joshua 23:1-16 *So be very careful to love the LORD your God.* (v.11)

Joshua assembled the people to give his final words to Israel. He tells them to be very careful to follow all the instructions written in the Book of the Law of Moses. The very first commandment God gave to His people was, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”

Joshua continues his advice, reminding the people of God’s faithfulness and warns about the dangers of friendship with the world. We, too, have to make a conscious choice to follow God or the world will squeeze us into its mold. Perseverance is required of believers. Being baptized or confirmed or making a profession of faith is just the start. We need to “walk the talk,” living out our faith 24/7, not just on Sunday morning.

Joshua’s decision in 24:15 should be one we all make: “As for me and my family, we will serve the LORD.”

Psalms 55; Romans 15:25-33; Matthew 27:11-23

by Jacqueline Littleford

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Good News Daily

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Sunday, July 29

Mark 2:23-28 *Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."* (vv.27-28)

The Sabbath is not necessarily Sunday. I feel a trembling of the earth when I say this. Yes, I know that Sunday is Sunday—a day for worship, gathering of the faithful, for welcoming and nurturing new believers or searchers. But truth be told, Sunday is by far my busiest day of the week. Three services, preparation, praying, teaching, non-stop interactions. Not a day of rest at all...I do take time to give thanks and pray for others in the framework of the liturgy.

The actions of Jesus make it clear that the Sabbath is a day for saving life, not just in the meaning of rescuing a person from a life-threatening situation, but bringing all to wholeness. We would all do well to set aside a regular time each week for doing that which contributes to wholeness, and our relationship with our Lord—for both ourselves and others. Honor the purpose of a Sabbath without falling into legalistic thinking—which squashes the essence it.

Joshua 24:1-15; Psalms 24, 29; Acts 28:23-31

Monday, July 30

Matthew 27:24-31 *When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. "I am innocent of this man's blood," he said. "It is your responsibility!"* (v.24)

Sometimes I feel a little like Pig-Pen from Charlie Brown. I can be the poster boy for a walking mess, working or puttering around on cars or motorcycles. My hands and nails are sometimes an unspeakable mess. My mother always taught me to wash my hands before dinner, but sometimes as a child I did not. She would frequently say, "You are not coming to the dinner table with hands like that," and then point to the soap on the kitchen sink. I am much better now about clean hands, but what about the unseen things? We all have them: challenges at work or at home, with relationships or friends. Living life to the fullest can frustrate or spark anger to the point of wanting to wash my hands of the whole mess. Then there are the spiritual challenges: making time for prayer, serving the needs of the less fortunate, trying to live the Beatitudes, or just loving your unlovable neighbor.

The soap and water at the sink are easy, but confronting our shortcomings and putting them at the foot of the Cross of Christ takes

thought, prayer, and perspective. It is the realization that we have all been washed clean and dressed in white before the Lamb by the blood of Christ. Come and see.

Joshua 24:16-33; Psalms 56, 57, 58; Romans 16:1-16

Tuesday, July 31

Matthew 27:32-44 *As they were going out, they met a man from Cyrene, named Simon, and they forced him to carry the cross.* (v.32)

Frequently we are called by others to walk with them in grief, pain, or uncertainty, carrying one another's burdens in a demonstrative way. I came to the Cathedral earlier than usual one day, and as I walked into the courtyard, I noticed an unknown woman sitting there. I asked her if she needed help and she immediately said, "Yes" and, after a brief pause, continued with, "Will you bury my child?" She had been to the church across the street with the same question, and they had said, "No." Her son and his partner had been murdered in the Pulse nightclub massacre and she wanted him to have a Christian burial. Tears welled in her eyes as she waited for an answer. The question ultimately was, "What would Jesus do?" The answer was, "Yes, of course we can."

Over the next few days we walked through the planning for a memorial Eucharist to celebrate his life and witness to the risen Lord. We worked, we planned, we prayed, we laughed at special stories and moments. And through the process God was there in a mighty way, leading us, comforting us, guiding us through this difficult time.

Judges 2:1-5, 11-23; Psalms 61, 62; Romans 16:17-27

Wednesday, August 1

Matthew 27:45-54 *About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?")* (v.46)

At midnight the door was kicked in and two deputized citizens came in and immediately went to the corner of the room and picked up a package in the trash. The person opening the door was then whisked away speedily to be taken into a dirty and barely lit bathroom where they were handcuffed to a urinal. The fear, the questioning, and the loneliness of waiting, waiting, waiting with one hand immovable. Surely there was some mistake. Surely, they have the wrong person. God, where are You in all of this? Where is Your compassion, Your love, Your all-encompassing embrace? All that was heard was the mocking, chiding, and laughter with spittle and snuff. No phone call or communication. No texting. No miranda. Only heat, humidity, and smells of uncleanness. A fitting circumstance? I don't think so, yet minimal compared to Jesus' suffering. Holy Father, have You forsaken me? Help me, Lord.

Judges 3:12-30; Psalm 72; Acts 1:1-14

Thursday, August 2

Matthew 27:55-66 *Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. (vv.59-60a)*

He was always a bit unkempt. Tattered and worn and a bit odiferous on a regular basis. He was the first person I saw as I came up to unlock the Cathedral's doors, for he had been sleeping on our steps all night. He never had the demeanor or look of one who regularly imbibes a bit too much. Just a bit scruffy but always eager to come into God's house on Sunday morning. His seat was on the back row. He was a veteran. He had a captivating smile. He listened, participated in worship, went over for the coffee hour, and then wandered off. Sully was his name.

One morning we could not wake him up! He was taken to a local hospital where he died. He was one of our own, so we brought him back to the Cathedral and gave him a fitting memorial service and committed his ashes in our Memorial Garden. I do think of him often, robed in white sitting at the heavenly banquet table. God is glorified by his presence.

Judges 4:4-23; Psalms 70, 71; Acts 1:15-26

Friday, August 3

Matthew 28:1-10 *After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. (v.1)*

One thing that I am sure of is the importance of women in the church—throughout history, but also at the foundational beginnings at the empty tomb. Where would the faith be if the women had not been going to the tomb, while all the men were hiding in the upper room for fear of the Jews? I am forever thankful for them and the women in my life who hold me accountable and strengthen me at points of weakness and disappointment, and share my joy in the good times.

Judges 5:1-18; Psalm 69; Acts 2:1-21

Saturday, August 4

Matthew 28:11-20 *When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, telling them, "You are to say, 'His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.'" (vv.12-13)*

There are always many sides to a situation. Even black and white, when looked at for an extended period, appears to have shades of grey. Scripture tells us that the guards at the tomb are given large sums of money to tell a story of the apostles spiriting the body of Jesus away from the empty tomb. Dan Brown even wrote a book, made into a movie, denying the

empty tomb. Yet, the Holy Spirit still speaks boldly to generation after generation, and the hope and promise of the empty tomb and the resurrection are still foundational in the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Allow yourself a moment of vulnerability. Let our Savior anoint you with water from the streams of living water, to build you up and strengthen you, mold you in his image to strengthen your faith and be a radiant beacon of his love to others. And allow yourself to be loved by the Father—the one who loved us so very much, that He gave His Son so that we might live life abundantly.

Judges 5:19-31; Psalms 75, 76; Acts 2:22-36

by Michael Matheny

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