

Good News Daily

JUNE 4 – JULY 1, 2017

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Sunday, June 4

Psalm 118 *The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This is the LORD's doing; It is marvelous in our eyes.* (vv.22-23 NKJV)

I proudly display the American flag in front of my home—a symbol of pride and unity; a reminder of freedom.

For many years a gold cross adorned my neck—a reminder Jesus is always with me. Now, I enhance my Sunday outfit with one of my decorative crosses.

My neighbor displays two seven-inch solar powered crosses on his lawn. They shine bright in the darkness. One day he called to me, asking if I would like his extra cross. I hesitated before saying yes and allowing him to place it in my flowerbed. Now, I must ask myself why I hesitated. The cross, a symbol of my salvation—am I ashamed to let the world know I'm a Christian? I didn't hesitate to show the world I'm an American when I hung the flag. Perhaps I'm not unlike Peter who denied Jesus three times despite following and loving him.

Now, I watch the flag flying throughout the day and admire the cross shining at night. One day, God will reject those who reject Jesus.

Isaiah 11:1-9; 1 Corinthians 2:1-13; John 14:21-29

Monday, June 5

Psalm 41 *The LORD will preserve him and keep him alive, and he will be blessed on the earth; You will not deliver him to the will of his enemies. The LORD will strengthen him on his bed of illness; you will sustain him on his sickbed.* (vv.2-3)

I labeled the Mason jar “Showers of Blessings” and cut strips of colored paper to write the blessings I received each day. This was the second year of going through surgeries and painful recoveries and I needed to remind myself how the godly suffer as well as receive God's blessings. No matter how small the blessing—a phone call, card, or flower blooming in the yard—I wrote it down. They were signs of God's goodness. The jar quickly became colorful with blessings.

Others write in journals or on calendars to count their blessings. My mom kept a daily logbook of each event. I can look at her book so many years later and see exactly how many times in a month I phoned and visited. Despite the era being before the convenience of today's technology, I should have done better.

Perhaps I should not only count the blessings I receive, but blessings I bestow on others. Each blessing given and received is from God: "And he will be blessed on the earth" (v.2).

Deuteronomy 11:13-19; Psalm 52; 2 Corinthians 5:11—6:2; Luke 17:1-10

Tuesday, June 6

Deuteronomy 12:1-12 *"These are the statutes and judgment which you shall be careful to observe in the land which the LORD God of your fathers is giving you to possess, all the days that you live on the earth."* (v.1)

Both sides of my paternal ancestors sailed the vast seas from Great Britain to the New World of America in the 1600's. When curiosity lead me to know my family, I prepared myself for the bad along with the good. I found them settled in Yorktown, Virginia and Wethersfield, Connecticut. Although wealthy, respected business, land, and slave owners, the family fortunes would be lost to the Revolutionary War. However, their first homes remain standing to this day.

I can't help wondering if my ancestors felt like the Israelites who crossed the Jordan in order to enter the Promised Land. Surely they felt the same anxieties of the unknown, fear of conquering inhabitants, and questions about the establishment of a new culture. Although the Israelites and the early settlers of America came from strong religious backgrounds, all would need to be reminded of God's mighty acts, His covenant, and His commands.

God demands the same from us today. We must demonstrate our love and faith by obedience of His laws. In return, God promises abundant blessings if we live responsibly.

Psalm 45; 2 Corinthians 6:3—7:1; Luke 17:11-19

Wednesday, June 7

Deuteronomy 13:1-11 *"You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice; you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him."* (v.4)

Good and evil. Remember the proverbial angel on the right shoulder and devil on the left? My winged angel is adorned in glowing white, while my horned devil wears red and a jeer on its face.

I placed school supplies, including ten packs of folders, in the basket for the upcoming back-to-school church collection. Before I left the store I checked the receipt which is my habit. I was charged for eleven folders, not ten, and I promptly advised the clerk. I didn't recount them and it nagged at me. Arriving home I popped the trunk and removed the folders. I counted *eleven* packs. "No, it can't be," I muttered to myself as I recounted. God's Eighth Commandment, "You shall not steal," (Exodus 20:15) clashed with the one on my left shoulder:

"It's only a dollar," the evil one shouted."

"Thou shall not steal," whispered the winged one.

"It would cost you more in gas than it's worth."

"Thou shall not steal."

The next morning, I handed the clerk a dollar along with my apology.

Psalm 119:49-72; 2 Corinthians 7:2-16; Luke 17:20-37

Thursday, June 8

Luke 18:1-8 *"There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. Now there was a widow in that city and she came to him, saying, 'Get justice for me from my adversary.'"* (vv.2-3)

Looking for something to amuse myself, I wandered into the Museum of Seminole County History. This twenty-two room structure was built in 1926 as an "old folk's home". Before Social Security existed there was a need for a place the elderly poor without family could live and be cared for. In both the Old and New Testaments, it is insisted widows and orphans be taken care of. Exodus 22:22-24 tells us of God's concern for them. Isaiah 1:17 says to defend the fatherless and plead for the widow, while 1 Timothy 5 insists families take care of them.

President Roosevelt signed the Social Security Act in 1935. Prior to that, indigent people of all ages were sent to the "poor house" to work and live in squalor. This particular "old folk's home" provided individual rooms, chores, and activities. Although segregated for meals, the residents were well treated. I wonder if a widow was the advocate for the establishment of this home.

Should we be any less concerned for the widow and orphan than the Lord?

Deuteronomy 16:18-20, 17:14-20; Psalm 50; 2 Corinthians 8:1-16

Friday, June 9

Luke 18:9-14 *Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector." (vv.9-10)*

Lord, give *me* wisdom. Open *my* mind so I can understand and remember Your words. Fill *me* with Your Holy Spirit. Give *me* compassion for others. Forgive *me* my sins.

Not a bad prayer in itself, but as I prayed I suddenly realized how many times I used the word *me*. I wonder how many times I've prayed this prayer. You might ask, "What's wrong with it? It sounds all right to me." Well, it's all about *me*.

Matthew 6:9 says, "In this manner, therefore, pray: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven...'" God takes care of us. God forgives us. God protects us. Jesus, who taught us to pray, gives us a prayer about God, not us.

Praying for yourself is appropriate; however, next time you're in your quiet place praying, take time to listen to your own prayer. Is it all about *me*?

Who do you pray like—the Pharisee or the tax collector?

Deuteronomy 26:1-11; Psalms 40, 54; 2 Corinthians 8:16-24

Saturday, June 10

Luke 18:15-30 *Then they also brought infants to Him that He might touch them; but when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them to Him and said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God." (vv.15-16)*

I watched the little children rush to the front of the church with their colorful backpacks and realized how I longed for the days of getting children ready for back-to-school. The pastor said *we must world-proof the children* as he performed the brief ceremony of the "Blessing of the Backpacks." As I look back on this day I wonder if I do enough for God's children.

I believe there are no coincidences; God places people in our paths for His purpose. Knowing I'm unable to perform some charitable acts which include children, I've prayed for a worthwhile activity. Since I teach beginning sewing and have a small sewing business, it makes sense God would answer my prayer at the fabric store where I met two women. The coordinator of *Ryan's Case for Smiles in Orlando* was placing a poster on the bulletin board. The non-profit charity makes bright, whimsical

pillowcases for each child who is admitted to several children's hospitals in the area. They were praying for volunteers to make pillowcases.

God answered our prayers when He crossed our paths.

Deuteronomy 29:2-15; Psalm 55; 2 Corinthians 9:1-15

by Shirley J. Conley

Volume XVII

June 11-17, 2017

Number 24

Sunday, June 11

Psalm 24 (NIV) *The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it on the seas and establish it on the waters. Who may ascend the mountain of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? The one who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not trust in an idol or swear by false God may enter. Who is he, this King of glory? The LORD Almighty—he is the King of glory.* (vv.1-4, 10 NIV)

When I was serving in the Coast Guard many, many years ago, we often found ourselves on drug interdiction patrol. Our mission was to deter the entrance of illegal drugs into the United States. We frequently were running a darkened ship at night, with no lights, so we were not so visible from many miles away. One of the fondest memories I have from those patrols was standing on the bridge wing in the dark. I would gaze up into the heavens and see more stars than anyone could count. It was an awesome view and it is hard to describe the immenseness of it all. I can truly say I caught a glimpse of the King of glory.

“And when the sky was starless in the void of the night he spoke into the darkness and created the light. Our God is an awesome God. He reigns from heaven above with wisdom, power, and love. Our God is an awesome God” (lyrics by Rich Mullins).

Ponder that.

Deuteronomy 29:16-29; Psalm 29; Revelation 12:1-12; Matthew 15:29-39

Monday, June 12

Luke 18:31-43 *Jesus stopped and ordered the blind beggar to be brought to him. When he came near, Jesus asked him, “What do you want me to do for you?” “Lord, I want to see,” he replied. Jesus said to him, “Receive your sight; your faith has healed you.” Immediately he received his sight and follow Jesus, praising God.* (vv.40-43)

Is that not the question Jesus asks us all every day? “What do you want me to do for you?” Is our answer something like a bigger house, more

money, more clothes, more cars, a summer home? Or is our answer, “To be more like you”? Once we come to know Christ, the first thing that should prosper is on the inside of us, not on the outside.

Jesus said the man’s faith made him well. What is faith? Faith is being sure of what you hope for, and certain of what you do not see (Hebrews 11:1). Faith and doubt cannot coexist. You can start with faith the size of a mustard seed—and that is quite small. To help your faith grow, you should study God’s word and surround yourself with other people of faith.

After receiving his sight, the man who was healed “followed Jesus, praising God.” That’s God’s will for us, too. “Rejoice always, pray continuously, give thanks in all circumstances [note: not *for* all, but *in* all]; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

Ponder that.

Deuteronomy 30:1-10; Psalms 56, 57, 58; 2 Corinthians 10:1-18

Tuesday, June 13

Deuteronomy 30:11-20 *This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him.* (vv.19-20a)

Can you name someone you know, but do not love? That is easy. We all can. The harder question is, can you name someone you love, but do not know. In today’s passage, we are told to love God. How can we love Him if we do not know Him? To know Him, we have to spend time with Him. He longs to spend time with us. How do we listen to Him? We spend time reading and meditating on His word in the Scriptures. How do we hold fast to him? We become obedient. It’s really pretty simple.

Ponder that.

Psalms 61, 62; 2 Corinthians 11:1-21a; Luke 19:1-10

Wednesday, June 14

2 Corinthians 11:21b-33 *I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without*

sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. (vv.23b-27)

How many of us would go to such toil and trouble just for the privilege of preaching the gospel? Paul did so without reservation, without grouching, and without complaining. Paul lived this lifestyle because he believed it. If we don't live it, we don't believe it.

Ponder that.

Deuteronomy 31:30—32:14; Psalm 72; Luke 19:11-27

Thursday, June 15

2 Chronicles 6:18-31 “When famine or plague comes to the land, or blight or mildew, locusts or grasshoppers, or when enemies besiege them in any of their cities, whatever disaster or disease may come, and when a prayer or plea is made by anyone among your people Israel—being aware of their afflictions and pains, and spreading out their hands toward this temple—then hear from heaven, your dwelling place. Forgive, and deal with everyone according to all they do, since you know their hearts (for you alone know the human heart), so that they will fear you and walk in obedience to you all the time they live in the land you gave our ancestors.” (vv.28-31)

These reflections were written almost a year before publication. So many things have happened in the intervening time. But let's talk about just a few that have happened already. Famine in Africa, drought in California, and citrus blight Florida. The Zika virus is on the move; cancer, AIDS, STDs and other chronic conditions are increasing. ISIS terrorism will continue worldwide and the global economy will continue to flounder.

What will it take for us to fear the Lord and walk in obedience to Him all the time we live in this land?

Ponder that.

Psalms 70, 71; 2 Corinthians 12:1-10; Luke 19:28-40

Friday, June 16

Psalm 69 I will praise God's name in song and glorify him with thanksgiving. This will please the LORD more than an ox, more than a bull with its horns and hooves. The poor will see and be glad—you who seek God, may your hearts live! The LORD hears the needy and does not despise his captive people. Let heaven and earth praise him, the seas and all that move in them, for God will save Zion and rebuild the cities of Judah. Then people will settle there and possess it; the children of his servants will inherit it, and those who love his name will dwell there. (vv.30-36)

Have you ever wondered what God’s will is for you? 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 gives us one of the answers: rejoice always, pray continuously, give thanks in all circumstances. Note that it says *in* all circumstances, not *for* all circumstances. The Lord inhabits eternity. He dwells in “a high and holy place but also with the one who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite” (Isaiah 57:15).

Does humble in spirit with a heart of the contrite describe you and me?

Ponder that.

2 Chronicles 26:1-22; 2 Corinthians 12:11-21; Luke 19:41-48

Saturday, June 17

2 Corinthians 13:1-14 *Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test? And I trust that you will discover that we have not failed the test. Now we pray to God that you will not do anything wrong—not so that people will see that we have stood the test but so that you will do what is right even though we may seem to have failed. For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth. We are glad whenever we are weak but you are strong; and our prayer is that you may be fully restored. This is why I write these things when I am absent, that when I come I may not have to be harsh in my use of authority—the authority the Lord gave me for building you up, not for tearing you down.* (vv.5-10)

What would be different if we examined ourselves to see whether we are holding to our faith? What would happen if we tested ourselves? Would we test positive for Jesus? We seem to have a problem identifying sin. Jesus never did.

Ponder that.

2 Chronicles 31:2-10, 20-21; Psalms 75, 76; Luke 20:1-8

by Richard Mead

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Sunday, June 18

Matthew 18:1-14 *Then [Jesus] said, “I tell you the truth, unless you turn from your sins and become like little children, you will never get into the*

Kingdom of Heaven. So anyone who becomes as humble as this little child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.” (vv.3-4 NLT)

When I think about children, the first descriptor which leaps to mind is not usually “humble”. Delightful, energetic, trusting, joyful, and yes, loud, are all on the list before “humble”. I’ve always thought of humble as a sacrificial thing, which requires me to give up something to please God. And let’s face it: anyone who has been in a room with one toy and two kids knows that “sacrificial giving” is not their go-to place.

So what did Christ mean when he praised this child for being humble? Well, I think it’s because of one thing that children are so much more aware of than adults—they need help. Food, shelter, guidance, and love are all provided by adults. They know that they can’t exist on their own. Sometimes they rebel against that fact, but they all know it.

When Jesus encouraged us to become “as humble as this little child,” I believe he wanted us to embrace this dependence. We need Christ’s help. We cannot exist without God. “Humble” is about so much more than giving up our toys.

2 Chronicles 32:1-23; Palms 93, 96; Revelation 15:1-8

Monday, June 19

Luke 20:9-19 Now Jesus turned to the people again and told them this story: “A man planted a vineyard, leased it to tenant farmers, and moved to another country to live for several years.” (v.9)

This might shock you, but Jesus offended people. To illustrate, take this section from Luke where Jesus tells the story of the “Wicked Tenant Farmers.” This parable tells how the tenant farmers unlawfully stole the profits from the farm entrusted to them. To this end they beat the servants the owner sent, and eventually killed the owner’s beloved son rather than pay up.

This parable was an in-your-face condemnation of the temple Pharisees, who rejected the message of the prophets and ruled for their own power rather than God’s. And where did Jesus preach this? On the temple steps. Right in the faces of the Pharisees.

As Christians, we are called to live in peace with others, but not when it conflicts with the truth. God sent His beloved Son to make those tenant farmers accountable. We’re called to do the same—even if it offends someone.

1 Samuel 1:1-20; Psalm 80; Acts 1:1-14

Tuesday, June 20

Acts 1:15-26 *So they nominated two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias. Then they cast lots, and Matthias was selected to become an apostle with the other eleven.* (vv.23, 26)

This is the section of the Book of Acts I like to call “The Guy Who Wasn’t Picked.”

Jesus had just ascended into heaven, and the now-we-are-eleven apostles felt they needed to choose a twelfth. They decided on two candidates, Justus and Matthias, both of whom had been with them since the early days of Christ’s ministry. Some traditions say that they were part of the seventy workers Jesus sent “forth as lambs in the midst of wolves” in Luke 10. But regardless of their specific backgrounds, they’d both known Jesus and were exceptional choices. So the disciples cast lots. And Justus lost.

There are times when you think God’s plan for you is certain—the perfect job, an award you deserve, the dream house, etc.—only to have those plans inexplicably crumble. Those plans may have even gone forward, but not with you. And sometimes it hurts.

But while Justus might not have become an apostle, he continued to be a vital part of the young church, even (according to one tradition) becoming venerated as Saint Justus of Eleutheropolis. God’s plans for you might involve temporary failure, but they never involve defeat.

1 Samuel 1:21—2:11; Psalm 78:1-39; Luke 20:19-26

Wednesday, June 21

Psalms 119:97-120 *You are my hiding place and my shield; I hope in your word.* (v.114 ESV)

Do you have a “safe place” in your life? I’m not talking so much a safe place from physical threat, but more like a place which protects your mind and heart from what Shakespeare calls “the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.” It may be your friend. It may be when you are with your spouse or child. Heck, it may even be your church. But whatever that safe place is, I ask you now to imagine it in your mind.

Now, imagine that this safe place has been completely ripped away from you.

Many of the issues we see in the Healing Ministry can be boiled down to this one thing—a person thought they had a safe place, but that place disappeared. In some cases, the disappearing took place decades ago, but the person still holds on to the anger, bitterness, mistrust, and even grief. That is why the words of the Psalm 119 are so important. God is the ultimate “safe place”—our hiding place and our shield. He can never, ever

be ripped away from us (Romans 8:38-39). If your “safe place” is anywhere except in Christ’s arms, consider relocating.

1 Samuel 2:12-26; Acts 2:1-21; Luke 20:27-40

Thursday, June 22

Acts 2:22-36 “*God raised Jesus from the dead, and we are all witnesses of this.*” (v.32 NLT)

The hit Broadway play *Hamilton: An American Musical* tells the tale of a man of questionable parentage, who rose to fame in the face of a hostile power, who founded a new movement, who died too young...okay, you probably see some comparisons to Christ’ story. But one thing which this musical highlights, and which is often overlooked in the Christian literature, is the importance of the *witnesses*.

The second chapter of Acts tells how God sent His Holy Spirit to comfort and encourage Christ’s followers. And Peter, filled with the Spirit’s power, joyfully shouts Jesus’ story to the astonished crowds. “God raised Jesus from the dead! We are the witnesses!”

Today, we Christians are the ones who tell Christ’s story. We are the witnesses. Maybe we won’t get a Tony award, but we do get the Holy Spirit. All things considered, that’s not a bad deal.

1 Samuel 2:27-36; Psalms 34, 83; Luke 20:41—21:4

Friday, June 23

Psalms 88 *You have taken away my companions and loved ones. Darkness is my closest friend.* (v.18)

Anyone who thinks the Bible is a nice or sweet book should take a look at Psalm 88. This poem is a nightmare of honesty. It starts off in despair, and gets worse. It is a scream of unfiltered, primal pain.

And yet, this psalm, like all the others, was sung as a public prayer to God. Or, to put it another way, it is something our Father wants us to sing to Him. He wants us to strip off our “happy masks” and bring Him the horrors that we have been deceived into believing we must face alone.

If you are hurting, try shouting Psalm 88 at the top of your lungs. Don’t be afraid of your darkness; God isn’t. As Corrie Ten Boon wrote, “There is no pit so deep, that God’s love is not deeper still.”

1 Samuel 3:1-21; Acts 2:37-47; Luke 21:5-19

Saturday, June 24

Luke 21:20-28 “*And there will be strange signs in the sun, moon, and stars. And here on earth the nations will be in turmoil, perplexed by the roaring seas and strange tides.*” (v.25)

A few years ago a friend of mine bought a house. Now, I use the term “house” loosely, because it was in a state of utter disrepair. The walls were caked with grime and mold. There were holes right through the roof. A raccoon lived in the attic. The place was, in short, a nightmare. I remember walking through the rooms, trying not to let my horror show on my face.

But today, this house is a neighborhood jewel-box—spacious and beautiful, full of light, with nary a raccoon in sight. This is because my friend has been flipping houses for decades. She walked into that disaster zone and saw exactly what the house could become—and knew who to call to accomplish it. She had the vision to see the bleak house’s bright future.

Today, our whole world seems a bit of a disaster zone, and too often I view the news with the same horror I felt when I walked through that derelict house. I suspect I’m not alone. But when I get overwhelmed, passages like this one in Luke give me comfort. Christ told us that the world would be in utter disrepair, but that this would lead to his return. He left us with this precious prophetic vision of the “neighborhood jewel-box” that our desperate world will become.

1 Samuel 4:1b-11; Psalms 87, 90; Acts 4:32—5:11

by Ruth Owen

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Number 26

Sunday, June 25

1 Samuel 4:12-22 *And she said, “The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured.”* (v.22 NKJV)

If someone thinks that the Bible is only full of encouraging stories, have them look at 1 Samuel. This short section contains more heartache than anyone can bear. Israel has lost to the Philistines, who have taken the ark of the Covenant. After learning this, and finding that his sons have died in battle, the great judge/prophet Eli falls dead, prompting his now widowed daughter-in-law to name her child Ichabod, which means “There is no glory.” Worst day ever!

When we go through “Ichabod” times, it’s good to know that it isn’t forever. Eli had already trained Samuel, who chose Saul and then King David, who became an ancestor of Christ. No matter how bad things get, God’s glory will return.

Psalms 66, 67; James 1:1-18; Matthew 19:23-30

Monday, June 26

Acts 5:12-26 Yet more and more people believed and were brought to the Lord—crowds of both men and women. As a result of the apostles' work, sick people were brought out into the streets on beds and mats... (vv.14-15 NLT)

Recently I visited an exotic animal rescue. The variety of species was breathtaking—from peacocks to guinea pigs, wallabies to giant tortoises, and everything in between. There were even a few chickens and squirrels in the mix. These animals had nothing in common, except that they were brought here because they were sick and discarded by the ones who should have loved them. Now they lived a happy, cared-for life with their other once abandoned brothers and sisters.

The scene seemed to perfectly sum up the early Christian Church, where sick and discarded people were brought to the apostles for healing. No one was turned away. What a lovely picture of Christ's unconditional love!

1 Samuel 5:1-12; Psalm 89:1-18; Luke 21:29-36

Tuesday, June 27

Psalm 100 Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth. (v.1 NASB)

People raised in the South might recognize the expression “Jesus Shoes.” No, these are not the first century “Birkenstocks” that Christ wore when he walked in Galilee. Instead, this saying refers to the tight, shiny, and vastly uncomfortable dress shoes that children wore to Sunday services. Sadly, for many in my generation, worshipping Christ meant droning sermons and unforgiving shoes.

Psalm 100 gives us a different way to worship God—with joyful shouts, singing, and celebration. “Give thanks to Him, bless His name.” Personally, I’ll take this worship service over tight shoes any day!

1 Samuel 6:1-16; Psalms 97, 99; Acts 5:27-42; Luke 21:37—22:13

Wednesday, June 28

1 Samuel 7:2-17 So Samuel took a young lamb and offered it to the LORD as a whole burnt offering. He pleaded with the LORD to help Israel, and the LORD answered him. (v.9 NLT)

If you’ve never used the website “Bible Gateway,” you should give it a try. You can compare several versions of the Bible side by side, seeing the differences in each translation. Some differences are small, some big, but they are always interesting. For example, when I compared these verses in 1 Samuel, the thing that jumped out at me weren’t differences in the verses, but differences in the passage headings (which were added by the

editors).

The ESV edition calls this section “Samuel Judges Israel.” In the NLT, it’s “Samuel Leads Israel to Victory.” The Easy to Read version labels it “The Lord Saves the Israelites.” After reading the passage, I’d call it “The Lord Answers Israel” because of verse 9.

Sections of our lives have headings, too. If there is a “passage” of your life with a discouraging heading, please take another look with God’s eyes. You might see something new and encouraging. It might be time to change that heading!

Psalms 101, 109; Acts 6:1-15; Luke 22:14-23

Thursday, June 29

Luke 22:24-30 *“Who is more important, the one who sits at the table or the one who serves? The one who sits at the table, of course. But not here! For I am among you as one who serves.”* (v.27)

On the night of January 13, 1982, Air Florida Flight 90 crashed into the freezing waters of the Potomac River. Only six people survived the crash, and they were quickly dying in the icy water. A lone helicopter dropped a lifeline into the hands of a passenger. But, instead of using the lifeline to save himself, the man passed it to a woman beside him who was pulled to safety. This happened four more times, with the man always passing the lifeline to another. Five people were saved, but the man who had risked his safety to help five total strangers ultimately drowned.

When Christ told his disciples about serving others at the table, I don’t think he was talking about passing trays of Vienna sausages. He was talking about men like Arlen Williams, who “served” five strangers at the cost of his own life. Being a servant is not about the canapés.

1 Samuel 8:1-22; Psalm 105:1-22; Acts 6:15—7:16

Friday, June 30

1 Samuel 9:1-14 *There was a wealthy, influential man named Kish from the tribe of Benjamin.... His son Saul was the most handsome man in Israel—head and shoulders taller than anyone else in the land. One day Kish’s donkeys strayed away, and he told Saul, “Take a servant with you, and go look for the donkeys.”* (vv.1-3)

This passage always hits my heart in a particularly painful way. We are introduced to Saul, a handsome and loyal young man who had everything—wealth, looks, kindness, and brains. Heck, he even cared for wayward donkeys! He had it all...and yet this promising young man became King Saul, one of the most paranoid and tragic rulers in history.

Thousands of scholars have researched Saul’s prideful slide from

glory to madness, with many saying he richly deserved his fate. But my heart still breaks for this good son who made so many bad choices. If you have an unrepentant friend or relative, please pray for them. God has seen far too many Sauls.

Psalms 102; Acts 7:17-29; Luke 22:31-38

Saturday, July 1

Luke 22:39-51 *And one of them struck at the high priest's slave, slashing off his right ear. But Jesus said, "No more of this." And he touched the man's ear and healed him.* (vv.50-51)

Of the thirty-one healing miracles recorded in the gospels this one stands apart. While Christ's other healings dealt with curing disabilities, diseases, or death, this one dealt with a healing caused by violence. And, because of this, I find this one of the most encouraging healings of all.

I'm sure that Peter (John's gospel names him as the sword wielder) was only trying to defend his master, but striking out wasn't the right way. But, instead of lecturing Peter or berating his accusers, Jesus simply healed the man—a man with no faith, who clearly wished Jesus ill. The reason for the wound, the hatred of Jesus by the slave, even the powerful foes surrounding him, didn't matter a wit. Christ simply saw a human being in need of healing and healed him—period.

1 Samuel 9:15—10:1; Psalms 107:33-43, 108; Acts 7:30-43

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