

# *Good News Daily*

MAY 7 – JUNE 3, 2017

Volume XVII

May 7-13, 2017

Number 19

## **Sunday, May 7**

Psalm 63 *O God, you are my God, I pine for you; my heart thirsts for you, my body longs for you, as a land parched, dreary and waterless.* (v.1 NJB)

This psalm verse always makes me somewhat uncomfortable. It's like inadvertently overhearing a passionate lover's conversation.

I have a Trappist monk friend. The first few times I met with him, he talked about the importance of *desiring* God. It turns out Christian mystics have long spoken about that desire. (Writing commentaries on the Song of Songs was a creative work done by many of them.)

At that point in my life, I loved God, but it was a desire to be present with God. (I confess that it was often a desire to have God do something in my life.) It certainly wasn't a pining for, heart thirsting, body longing desire the psalmist describes.

A few years later, I was still grappling with this desire for God business. My monk friend said, "John, God already loves you more completely, deeply, and passionately than you could image. God wants, most of all, for you to join in that complete, deep, passionate love."

I wonder what would happen if we would allow ourselves to grow in love and desire for God? That love would be contagious!

Joshua 4:19-24, 5:1-9; Psalm 98; 1 Peter 5:1-11; Matthew 7:15-29

## **Monday, May 8**

Luke 6:1-11 *The scribes and the Pharisees were watching him to see if he would cure somebody on the Sabbath, hoping to find something to charge him with.* (v.7)

A member of our congregation seems to always be on the lookout for other Christians who "break the rules." He then dismisses them as "unfaithful."

Frankly, I've broken rules during my lifetime. I've never found someone reminding me of those failings to be at all helpful. What I've needed is for some caring Christian to lead this Prodigal back to the loving, healing, forgiving embrace of God, the Father. I've found that God responds

to our failings and weakness by loving us onto a more whole and complete path than the one we've strayed onto.

Our watchful congregation member often complains that the church is "full of unrighteous sinners." Actually, that may be a better reality than he thinks. Sinners usually know the way back to God and new life better than self-righteous people. God already knows everything about everybody. God really doesn't need help discovering our failings. What God does need are those who with love and compassion are willing to accompany us Prodigals return home to fullness of life in Christ.

Joshua 10:16-27; Psalms 41, 52; Colossians 1:1-14

## **Tuesday, May 9**

Colossians 1:15-23 *He is the Beginning, the first-born from the dead, so that he should be supreme in every way; because God wanted all fullness to be found in him and through him to reconcile all things to him...* (vv.18b-19)

In my spiritual life, I sometimes become so preoccupied with Jesus as my Savior, Shepherd, and Companion, that I forget about the cosmic dimension of Christ: the second person of the Holy Trinity.

I recently received some new images taken from the Hubble Telescope. They are breathtaking! They're also a reminder that the realities revealed in those images "came into being" through Jesus Christ, the Son of God. (John's Gospel reminds us, "not one thing came into being except through him.")

Those Hubble images recall for us that our Christian faith is grounded in the truth that the Son, the agent of Creation, was born into human history to share our humanity and existence.

Though being present and participating in the very creation of the universe, Jesus, the Son of God is always with us, sharing our problems, joys, victories, and failures, closer to us than we are ourselves. He is always at work reconciling all things to God, the Father.

This is the deepest mystery and the greatest love we can ever know and experience!

Joshua 10:29-43; Psalm 45; Luke 6:12-26

## **Wednesday, May 10**

Luke 6:27-38 *"Be compassionate just as your Father is compassionate."* (v.36)

I've worked with my fellow Vietnam veterans for over twenty years. Very often, they are convinced that God is judging and punishing. Talking with them about the cruel violence, fear, and horrors of war they've experienced, many of them eventually utter the statement, "God will never

forgive me!” That they believe this is an incredible tragedy. It’s as if Jesus Christ had never been born, died, and resurrected!

I often respond to their utterance of hopelessness by saying, “I’ll bet my life that God can and will forgive you.” That always brings about a stunned silence. Then, I’m able to tell them about the violence, fear, and horrors of war I experienced, witnessing to the “transforming power and transfiguring mercy” God has poured into my life. In that moment a new possibility opens for them.

There are many people who feel lost and unforgivable. They need us Christians to talk openly with them about our own brokenness, and the healing, love, and compassion God has given us.

That would fill the pews!

Joshua 11:1-23; Psalm 119:49-72; Colossians 1:24—2:7

### **Thursday, May 11**

Colossians 2:8-23 *You have been buried with him by your baptism; by which, too, you have been raised with up with him through your belief in the power of God who raised him from the dead.* (v.12)

Most of the baptisms I’m present for are of infants or small children. That makes it all too easy to view baptism as mostly about family, or being welcomed into a Christian community. It’s important to remember that something mysterious and incredibly profound takes place when someone is baptized.

Since the beginnings of the Church, Christians have believed that the promises and actions of the baptismal service, in a mysterious way, cause a person to participate in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and be filled with the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit. Having received those gifts in baptism, the baptized person is deeply united with Christ, and all who have been baptized. Thereby, all baptized persons, in heaven and on earth, are incorporated with the risen and ascended Jesus, into the Body of Christ. Wow! This is a major miracle we’re participating in.

Next time we attend a baptism, let our hearts absorb the familial love, joy, and excitement present while our souls sing, “Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!”

Joshua 13:1-13; Psalm 50; Luke 6:39-49

### **Friday, May 12**

Psalm 40 *I waited, I waited for Yahweh, then he stooped to me and heard my cry for help.* (v.1)

I was having coffee with a friend when she suddenly blurted out, “I’ve had a terrible argument with my best friend. I’ve prayed about it for two weeks, but God hasn’t done anything to help!”

The only advice I could offer her was what my Trappist monk friend told me to do when this happens. His answer was, “Persevere!”

We ran into each other about two weeks later. She said, “I’ve been meaning to call you. I hated your monk friend’s advice, but I kept on praying. Five days ago, during prayer, it came to me that I should visit my friend to say I was sorry about the argument, and that I missed her.”

Her friend answered the door, and immediately gave her a hug, saying, “I was praying a few minutes ago. It came to me that I should visit you to tell you I was sorry about the argument. I’ve missed you so much!”

When these two friends were both ready to reconcile, God acted! Sometimes the waiting in prayer is all about us being prepared for God’s answer.

Joshua 13:14-32; Psalm 54; Colossians 3:1-11; Luke 7:1-17

### **Saturday, May 13**

Colossians 3:12-17 *And may the peace of Christ reign in your hearts, because it is for this that you were called together in one body. Always be thankful.* (v.15)

A few years ago, a very special person in my life was dying of cancer. The closing months of her life were filled with pain, and an indignity that certainly must have deeply troubled this grand and gracious woman. Yet, every time I visited her, she seemed so radiant and very peaceful.

One day, I asked, “Dorothy, you are so peaceful in spite of all you’re enduring. How does that happen?” She answered, “When I realized I was dying, It occurred to me that I have so much and so many people to be thankful about. I asked God to help me remember them all. Every morning I pray a bit, and then get on with my thanksgivings. One morning I found myself thanking God for my cancer. I realized that I’d learned so much about myself dealing with this disease. Without it, I certainly wouldn’t have remembered all that I’ve given thanks for. The most amazing thing is that since I’ve started these thanksgivings I feel very peaceful.”

An amazing witness from an amazing human being. Thanksgiving and peacefulness go hand in hand!

Joshua 14:1-15; Psalm 55; Luke 7:18-35

*By John Ferguson*

**Sunday, May 14**

Psalm 29 *The LORD will bless His people with peace.* (v.11b NASB)

I was irritated and cranky this morning. Nothing specific caused it. I had no patience. I snapped at people. Everything and everyone irked me and I was tired of their selfish blasé attitudes. I was not pleasant to be around. I had a bad attitude just like the people around me. Where was my joy?

I realized I had not spent time with the Lord in several days. My mornings had been so busy that I forgot. And now, I (and the innocent people around me) was paying the price for it.

When I spend time with the Lord, my outlook is different. I find my joy in the Lord. When my mind and heart are focused on Him and I lift my prayers to the Lord, I receive peace. My focus goes away from the irritating, first world selfish problems that arise and onto my Lord and Savior. He gives me the peace that only God can bless His people with. I feel calm and ready to face the day with joy and share grace and patience when needed.

Joshua 17:14-18; Psalm 24; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-17; Matthew 7:7-14

**Monday, May 15**

Joshua 18:1-10 *So Joshua said to the sons of Israel, "How long will you put off entering, to take possession of the land which the LORD, the God of your fathers has given you?"* (v.3)

Danny was a sweetheart of a guy who worked with my husband 15 years ago down south. As the weight of an unexpected divorce was crushing his friend, my husband shared his faith with him and the hope that a life walking with Christ provides. It wasn't completely unfamiliar to Danny, he just hadn't "entered the land which the Lord had given him."

Last week we received a message from Danny thanking us for leading him back to the Lord. "Ever since you got me focusing on God again, my life has gone way beyond my wildest dreams. Thank you for taking the time to get my spiritual life back on track!"

There isn't a better message to receive! To God be the glory!

Father, show me folks in my life who need to be reminded to take possession of the land You have provided for them and not just live outside of it. Show me how to lovingly and gently share Your good news with them so they can have a life that goes beyond their wildest dreams.

Psalms 56, 57, 58; Colossians 3:18—4:18; Luke 7:36-50

## **Tuesday, May 16**

Luke 8:1-15 *“A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds ate it up. Some fell on rocky ground, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants.”* (vv.5-7 NIV)

I feel like the farmer. I have been scattering seeds in one particular place for a while now. I have been trying to water the soil and take care of the seeds. I have great affection for the soil where I have planted the seeds. I really want to see the seeds grow and flourish in the soil and yield a crop a hundred times more than I sowed.

I am afraid of predators, like the birds that would whisk the seeds away before they took root, or rocks in the soil that would stymie growth by preventing moisture and food from getting in, or thorny influences that choke out the seeds. I decided to pray about it. I ask the Lord to protect the seeds in the soil and nurture them. I pray that like a plant longs to be in the sun and nurtured by food and water these folks would long to grow closer to the Lord.

Joshua 20:1-9; Psalms 61, 62; Romans 12:1-21

## **Wednesday, May 17**

Joshua 21:43-45, 22:1-6 *Not one of the good promises which the LORD had made to the house of Israel failed; all came to pass.* (v.45)

God has made so many promises to us. He will always be with us. He will give us peace like no other. He will provide comfort and shelter and meet our needs. He can heal us and our relationships according to His will. He is in control. He can redeem any situation. He will sit in judgment; we are not to. He will take revenge, not us. He forgives our sin and gives us eternal life. These are only a few.

As humans, perhaps we have not kept the promises we have made or we have had others break their promises to us. It is difficult to believe that God keeps his promise *no matter what*. We are humans—sinful and imperfect. God is good and just and perfect. He is incapable of breaking His promises. We just needed Joshua to remind us of that.

Lord, it's hard for us to believe that You will keep Your promises. Forgive us for our lack of trust. Thank You for Joshua's reminder that when we struggle with disbelief You are still holy and faithful and will never fail us.

Psalm 72; Romans 13:1-14; Luke 8:16-25

## **Thursday, May 18**

Luke 8:26-39 *“Return to your house and describe what great things God has done for you.” So he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him. (v.39 NASB)*

Jesus told the demonic man to go and tell the people in his village about his healing. Surely Jesus knew there were people in the man’s village that needed to hear about the healing. What has Jesus done for you lately? Has he healed you of something, given you strength to endure tough times? God answers our prayers daily. There are folks who desperately need to hear that.

I think I find it easier to write about those things Jesus has done for me as opposed to sharing them with another person. Why? Am I afraid of what people think? Afraid of being rejected or sounding preachy? I think I should start asking God to nudge me when there is something I need to share.

Lord, thank You for the answered prayers and mini miracles You do in my life daily. Open my eyes and ears to know when You want me to share something and who I should share it with. I want to only glorify You. I pray also that You would go before me and prepare the hearer to be open to my words.

Joshua 22:7-20; Psalms 70, 71; Romans 14:1-12

## **Friday, May 19**

Luke 8:40-56 *Now they were all weeping and lamenting for her; but He said, “Stop weeping, for she has not died, but is asleep.” (v.52)*

How many times have I thought a situation was doomed with no way to fix it? Jesus knew the young girl had not died but was just asleep. I am grateful that God sees things differently than we do. He sees across time and space and in His providence He can redeem impossible situations. When we ask Him, He can make things work out better than we can imagine.

I just celebrated my 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. Woo-hoo! Twenty five years is a long time. They weren’t all good years. Most years were wonderful but there were one or two when neither of us thought we would make it to the next one. Satan would have liked nothing more than for us to decide our relationship was dead and to bury it. But Jesus knew it was just dormant. Through his divine intervention and some wise counselors and hard work, it was healed. Like I said, it’s better than we can imagine. To God be the glory!

Joshua 22:21-34; Psalm 106:1-18; Romans 14:13-23

## **Saturday, May 20**

Joshua 23:1-16 *“But you are to cling to the LORD, your God, as you have done to this day.”* (v.8)

Adalee was a brown stuffed teddy bear missing one eye and half the fur worn away. I loved Adalee. It was my security blanket. When I was sad or cranky or falling asleep, I wanted Adalee with me. My daughter had Sophie, the stuffed pink doll. My son had Biscuit, a soft stuffed Dalmatian dog head whose body was a blanket.

Most kids have something—a blanket, doll, stuffed animal—something they can cuddle with and call their own. They are our comforters. Then we get older and are told we need to get rid of our security “blankets”. Sometimes that isn’t easy for kids, they hold on tightly to them, cling to them, and refuse to give them up.

God is our security blanket, our refuge, our comforter in times of trials. Why shouldn’t we cling to Him? Some days we may need to cling to Him like a life saver. Other times we just need to know He is close by. I am not ashamed to say God is my salvation, my security, and I cling to Him every day.

Psalms 75, 76; Romans 15:1-13; Luke 9:1-17

*by Mara McClain*

**Volume XVII**

**May 21-27, 2017**

**Number 21**

## **Sunday, May 21**

Matthew 13:24-34a *He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches.”* (vv.31-32 NIV)

Jesus was teaching us that small beginnings can grow and produce good results when we trust in him. His words challenge me to keep my eyes open for opportunities to plant seeds of goodness and joy every day.

While grocery shopping, lightning knocked out all the power. Darkness is not a place I like to be. As fear creeped up my spine, I prayed; the fear and loneliness subsided.

When the power was restored, my eyes focused on an elderly gentleman who was frantically searching for an item while clutching a list. I offered to help, but he refused thanking me graciously. I insisted it wasn’t a bother as I have needed and asked for help on numerous occasions. Multiple

blessings were created by locating that item together.

To give or receive a blessing requires a transaction created by God. I noticed the gentleman, we acknowledged each other, trust was built, and Jesus blessed the transaction with humor, appreciation, and thanksgiving.

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

### **Monday, May 22**

James 1:1-15 *“If any of you don’t know what you’re doing, pray to the Father. He loves to help. You’ll get his help, and won’t be condescended to when you ask for it.”* (v.5 The Message)

What that means to me is to ask God how He sees me, what He wants me to know, and what He wants me to do when situations arise. I have discovered that my own perspective is only mine. God’s perspective is divine.

One day in prayer, God took me back to a childhood memory of shame through verbal comments. I had walked through forgiveness there on several occasions and asked why He took me there. He said, “Ask me.” So, I did. Hearing His perspective was something I had never thought or imagined before. It was so amazing and so life giving. That day, I learned that I need His perspective to help shine light on the path He has for me for good.

Frankly, I admit that I am not always willing to hear God’s perspective first. Yet, I know the freedom and peace that comes from making this choice and I encourage others to just try and see.

Deuteronomy 8:1-10; Psalm 80; Luke 9:18-27

### **Tuesday, May 23**

James 1:16-27 *“Post this at all the intersections, dear friends: Lead with your ears, follow up with your tongue, and let anger straggle along in the rear.”* (vv.19-20 The Message)

How many times have we done exactly what James cautions us not to do? Talking too much and listening too little tells others our ideas are more important than theirs. That behavior breeds feelings of neglect or offense and embarrassment. When anger is added to the equation, physical wounding will reinforce the consequence.

During healing prayer sessions, I have seen firsthand the consequences of this sinful behavior. Supplicants present with a need to control, to have their voices heard, to be perfect, to limit their goals, to expect failure coupled with low self-esteem. They are filled with shame. The power and love of God can break these chains, false judgments against them, and inner vows made.

Feeling blessed as an expectant grandmother, James' words are a guiding light to me. How can I prevent the creation of this shame and these false beliefs? How can I encourage this miracle to build joy and capacity to give and receive what God has planned for them?

Deuteronomy 8:11-20; Psalm 78:1-39; Luke 11:1-13

### **Wednesday, May 24**

James 5:13-18 *And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up.* (v.15 NIV)

The faith of people praying for our circumstance, not *our* faith, heals. This news is great assurance to me because I know that when a circumstance is big, my faith is often small. No matter the circumstances, it is the big faith of people praying that matters. And, we know all prayer is subject to God's will.

I recall being on a prayer team where the supplicant's circumstance was huge—terminal brain cancer that had not responded to surgery. While awaiting physician recommendations for the next step, he asked for prayer. He was angry with God. After telling his story, he told us to just go ahead and pray, because he had no confidence. We prayed knowing our faith in God is bigger than any circumstance. In our flesh, we could do nothing. God healed by revealing a deep hurt of shame, "not good enough," and striving for attention that was created when this person was a small child. Filled with the love and the power of God, chains of bondage were cut free. We all left that day with renewed hope in the power and love of God.

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

### **Thursday, May 25**

Matthew 28:16-20 *"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."* (vv.19-20)

Jesus' words affirm the reality of the Trinity which reminds us of the three-in-one nature of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

God the Father is *Creator*: He created me in His own image (Genesis 1:27) and "saw all that he had made, and it was very good" (Genesis 1:31) makes me know I was created perfectly and am loved and worthy. He delights in relationship with His creation.

God the Son is *Redeemer*: Redemption means to rescue from sin with a ransom. Jesus established a new covenant with us, showed us God with skin on as he healed in mind, body, spirit, and soul. Then, he took on our sins on the Cross as a perfect sacrificial lamb out of great love. Because

our Redeemer lives, there is always a way to have no separation from God.

God the *Holy Spirit*: “the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things, and will remind you of everything I have said to you” (John 14:26). Here is a 24/7 friend that guides, teaches, convicts, solves amazing problems, and comforts. He helps us live from “inside out” through Holy Spirit power instead of responding to external issues first.

God is a beautiful mystery. I am thankful we are on this journey together and pray for more living from the “inside out” for each of us.

Ezekiel 1:1-14, 24-28b; Psalms 8, 47; Hebrews 2:5-18

### **Friday, May 26**

Hebrews 4:14—5:6 *“Now that we know what we have—Jesus, this great High Priest with ready access to God—let’s not let it slip through our fingers. We don’t have a priest who is out of touch with our reality. He’s been through weakness and testing, experienced it all—all but the sin. So let’s walk right up to him and get what he is ready to give. Take the mercy, accept the help.”* (vv.14-16 The Message)

“Walk right up” means we come with boldness and confidence. Don’t be shy. If you don’t think you deserve to ask, think again. If the problem seems too big, think again. God’s mercy and help are available because Jesus is always available, always interceding, and promises us God’s forgiveness regardless of the sin.

A family member called me, asked for prayer, and told me his employer was moving him into a very different division with new responsibilities, boss, co-workers, and salary. Just four years from retirement, this news was devastating. He felt hopeless, unloved, and disconnected. I started to give him false reassurance. God stopped me and said, “Do you trust me to take care of this mess?” So, we did. He showered both of us with His reassurance and love; He promised to take charge of this issue if we followed Him.

The next day, my family member began to accept the idea of the new role. The day after that, God had done the impossible. His employer apologized for the whole situation and asked if he was willing to stay in his current position.

Ezekiel 1:28—3:3; Psalms 85, 86; Luke 9:28-36

### **Saturday, May 27**

Hebrews 5:7-14 *Once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.* (v.9 NIV)

Eternal salvation frees us from any guilt/shame label because of our

sin, sets aside judgment, and gives us underserved membership in God’s family. But if our image of God is distorted, there are barriers to maturity, transformation, and wholeness.

Because our image of God can be distorted by significant others in our life, plus hurts, disappointments, and losses, people need to know who God is if they are going to trust Him for help. That is why in healing prayer, one of the first questions we ask supplicants is, “How did you and the Lord get to know each other?”

I remember a woman who came seeking freedom from making poor choices in her personal relationships, increasing anxieties regarding work situations, a pattern of changing jobs and friends, and inability to hear God. Before she had arrived, God had revealed to us the name He had given her at birth: *Hannah*. While praying, a team member spoke blessings over “Hannah”. When she heard this name, she asked us how we knew that information.

When she understood that God was blessing her through us, she was doubly blessed. Hannah means favor/grace. God’s name for her renewed her hope in the living Christ.

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

*by Jane Shinn*

**Volume XVII**

**May 28-June 3, 2017**

**Number 22**

**Sunday, May 28**

Ephesians 2:1-10 *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.* (vv.8-9 NKJV)

I can elbow Jesus and God’s gift of salvation off the stage as I get behind the microphone and boast of my good works. Sometimes I will be subtler, with my good works showing I earned my salvation in front of all the right “church” people like my pastor, men’s Bible study leader, or the cute young lady who sits in the third row every Sunday.

How many times have I slipped into a casual conversation the fact I send monthly donations to a missionary friend in Africa or that I once went for two weeks to serve. Maybe it is the subtle pride of revealing to others that my friend and I are doing a one-year complete Bible study together or letting it slip that I stay after the Sunday service to help clean up.

All those actions are good for the kingdom but mean nothing to my salvation. Too many times I am guilty of pinning them on my chest as the

Pharisees did in front of Jesus. We all know our hearts and the difference in wearing them as medals to be seen or as encouragement to glorify God.

It is easy to be a Pharisee. Pharisees dress up in the robes of works and elbow Jesus right off the stage. I want to put Jesus up high on the stage and kneel before him with my head bent because I am not worthy of his great gift of eternity.

Ezekiel 3:16-27; Psalms 66, 67; Matthew 10:24-33, 40-42

### **Monday, May 29**

Luke 9:51-62 *“For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives but to save them.”* (v.56a)

I remember the many years of thoughts before I finally accepted Christ as my savior. Thoughts like “Christians don’t have any fun. Why would I want to follow this Jesus character?” This Jesus guy would ruin or destroy all my fun. I did have several people witness the transforming love of Christ to me, but I wanted no part of it.

So for years I went on my merry way living the “fun” life. Then one day I found myself broken—on my knees in tears because my life had become unmanageable. I was an alcoholic. My life of fun had come crashing down like a house of cards and I was empty inside. All the money I had saved, the status I had earned in my business, nor my friends could save me from my own destruction.

There was one friend waiting named Christ. The one I had snubbed my nose at years earlier. He was not there to destroy my life. I had done that all on my own. Christ was there to save my life from my own lousy habits—and he did. Isn’t that great news? We are not stuck with destructive habits because Christ can transform our ways. Transform habits like alcoholism, daily worry, pessimism, envy, anger, pride, etc. The list is truly endless. All of this potential change in addition to the gift of salvation.

Ezekiel 4:1-17; Psalm 89:1-18; Hebrews 6:1-12

### **Tuesday, May 30**

Psalm 97 *The heavens declare His righteousness, and all the peoples see His glory.* (v.6)

A simple and true principle is that when you see something awesome and complex there must be a maker. I have been blessed to travel to most parts of the world and witness the awesome power of our God’s creation in the heavens.

I have slept under the Alaskan sky seeing the glory of the northern lights while working three summers for a backcountry outfitter. I have watched two months of shooting stars peeking out of a cold sleeping bag at

10,000 feet in a wilderness area in Montana. I have been blessed to see the sunset over the Great Barrier Reef in Australia and the beauty of a sunrise sleeping in the jungles of Thailand. God allowed me on the east African plains of Tanzania to watch herds of animals run by full moonlight.

Maybe the most spectacular night sky was after a two-day camel trek into the Sahara dessert between Morocco and Algeria. We sang worship songs that night around a fire after dinner. As I tried to sleep on the camel blankets we rode out on, my mind settled on what inspired people over two thousand years ago to worship our God. He was the maker of the heavens herding those sheep late at night.

Ezekiel 7:10-15, 23b-27; Psalms 99, 100; Hebrews 6:13-20; Luke 10:1-17

### **Wednesday, May 31**

Luke 10:17-24 *“Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.”* (v.19)

I remember how I resisted giving up alcohol. I could not imagine a life without beer with pizza or pasta without red wine. Then I went to my first AA meeting and there were only two things that I remember from it. At the beginning, I heard someone read the promises from the AA Big Book. I knew at once that it was what I had been looking for all my life. I had tried everything to find peace, joy, and meaning and purpose in life. The promises offered them to me.

The second thing I remember was that someone came up to me afterward and asked me to come back. I remember saying to him, “I don’t think I can give up drinking for the rest of my life.” He said to me, “You don’t have to. Can you just give it up for today?” I realized at that moment that I only had to give it up one day at a time and I knew I could do without it for that day. That was quite a few thousand days ago. Truly, Jesus has given us authority and power to overcome all the power of the enemy.

Ezekiel 11:14-25; Psalms 101, 109:1-30; Hebrews 7:1-17

### **Thursday, June 1**

Hebrews 7:18-28 *Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantor of a better covenant.* (v.22 NIV)

I don’t know about you, but I like the new covenant given by Jesus a lot better than the Old Testament covenant. Growing up in a church that preached following the Ten Commandments and “being good” was too heavy for me. After years of rebellion, trying to fill that big empty hole in my heart, breaking many of the Ten Commandments on a regular basis, I finally gave up and committed my life to Christ. At that time, I did not

understand that I would be given power through the Holy Spirit to live a life of love—for God, for self, and for others. Letting Jesus live his resurrected life through me is a lot easier than trying hard, in my own strength, to “be good.”

Ezekiel 18:1-4, 19-32; Psalm 105:1-22; Luke 10:25-37

### **Friday, June 2**

Luke 10:38-42 *But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made.* (v.40a)

I don't know if you can relate, but I am easily distracted from keeping the eye of my heart focused on Jesus. I am a lot like Martha. I am easily distracted with worldly endeavors. I like to travel, play and watch sports, TV, movies, and love life in general. I spend a lot of time thinking and acting on the things I like. I love Jesus, but I spend more time in worldly pursuits than I do alone with him in Bible reading and study, in prayer, or in grateful praise.

I hear Jesus saying to me, “My child, my child, you are so easily distracted about many things, but only one thing is needed. Spend more time with me and it will not be taken away from you.”

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

### **Saturday, June 3**

Hebrews 9:1-14 *Now the first covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary. But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance.* (vv.1, 7)

Sometimes I feel like I am still emotionally tied down to the first covenant. As a product of the Episcopal Church, I became comfortable with the structure of their Sunday worship service. However, over the last few years, I have been feeling the urge to praise God on a different level. I find myself praying before a Sunday service that the Holy Spirit would help me to worship God like King David did when he returned the ark to the City of David: “David, danced before the Lord with all his might” (2 Samuel 6:14).

Jesus, through his death and resurrection, has given me direct access to God. No need for a high priest to sprinkle blood on the alter in behalf of my sins. I am covered with the blood of Christ and have forgiveness of sin and redemption with our Heavenly Father. While I love the Anglican traditions, I believe there is more to worship for me and I am asking the Holy Spirit to help me to break loose and worship Jesus as he directs my

heart. I believe the time will come when you may see me dancing in the isle because of my gratitude and joy in the Lord.

Ezekiel 43:1-12; Psalms 107:33-43, 108; Luke 11:14-23

*by Steve Ford*

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