

Good News Daily

November 4-December 1

Volume XVIII

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Number 44

Sunday, November 4

Matthew 18:21-35 *“This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”* (v.35 NIV)

Usually, I find the parables of Jesus hard to understand. But this parable was crystal clear to me. The first time I read it, I was convicted to the heart. I remember asking myself, “How many times have I acted like this unmerciful servant?” The answer was: far too many times. I saw a picture of myself in this parable.

Forgiveness is not any easy thing. I often think if I forgive someone I am just letting them “off the hook” with no consequences for their actions. But the fact is I am indebted to many other people for things I have done against them. And my desire is for them to forgive me. But this parable says it has to go both ways.

If I had to pay God back for all the sins I have committed, I could never do it. He freely and willingly and continually forgives me. In turn, I am required to do the same for other people. May I remember to show mercy and not have an unforgiving heart. Are you willing to forgive others like God has forgiven you?

Ezekiel 20:18-26; Psalms 24, 29; 1 Corinthians 12:27—13:13

Monday, November 5

Psalm 56 *Record my misery; list my tears on your scroll—are they not in your record?* (v.8)

I just love this verse. It amazes me that the God of the universe records my misery and tears. He actually keeps a record. A personal record of the trials and sufferings I am experiencing.

I know this may not be a literal interpretation, but the idea is there. The message is clear. God hears and is concerned with what is keeping me awake at night and when I cry. There is a record in heaven on my account. God is intimately acquainted with my pain.

May I remember to thank and praise Him for His concern for me. He is keeping track. He hears. He sees. He will act.

Ezekiel 20:27-44; Psalms 57, 58; Revelation 14:1-13; Luke 12:49-59

Tuesday, November 6

Ezekiel 24:1-14 *“I the LORD have spoken. The time has come for me to act. I will not hold back; I will have no pity, nor will I relent. You will be judged according to your conduct and your actions, declares the Sovereign LORD.”* (v.14)

We live in troubled times. Like most generations, I think the end of time and the return of Jesus could be very close at hand. It is a sobering thought. I don't like to think of God's judgement and wrath. But this is part of God's sovereignty. He will call all humankind to account.

This makes me ask two questions: “Am I ready for God's judgement? Are there those I know who are not ready for God's judgement?” I am responsible for myself. I am also responsible to be sharing the news of salvation to others. Then there is also the call to intercessory prayer for those who are not God followers. Again, sobering thoughts.

I am challenged as I read the whole of God's Word. I prefer to stick with the gospel accounts and the good news of Christ rather than the final judgement that will come to pass. My prayer is that God will help me be ready and get others ready through my words and prayers. Will you pray for someone who does not know Jesus today? I will.

Psalms 61, 62; Revelation 14:14—15:8; Luke 13:1-9

Wednesday, November 7

Luke 13:10-17 *When he had said this, all his opponents were humiliated, but the people were delighted with all the wonderful things he was doing.* (v.17)

Jesus was not afraid of confrontation. He speaks clearly and has a purpose with the words he chooses. Jesus speaks directly against the leaders showing their disregard for people and their need to have rules and regulations followed above all else. He shows them that this is an error, and not what God intends.

People, not rules, were important to Jesus. He took the initiative in this healing encounter. He sought the woman out, not the other way around. God is not confined by the rules of human beings. Jesus showed the religious leaders that God's work was not limited to certain days or times. He is at work all the time.

My prayer is that I would not put God in a box. I ask that God would grant me the ability to see Him as He really is, not what I think He is in human terms. Jesus said, “My Father is always at his work to this very

day, and I too am working” (John 5:17). Praise be to God who is constantly at work on our behalf.

Ezekiel 26:1-14; Psalm 72; Revelation 16:1-11

Thursday, November 8

Psalm 71 *Do not cast me away when I am old; do not forsake me when my strength is gone. As for me, I will always have hope; I will praise you more and more.* (vv.9, 14)

My parents are in their eighties. My dad has had heart trouble from the time he was fifty years old. To live into his eighties is quite remarkable. But now there are signs of his heart failing. His lungs are also compromised. His health is fragile. Yet, my dad shows no signs of his faith failing him.

After knowing Christ for many years, my dad is even more confident now that God is with him. He has the assurance that whatever health crisis he goes through, God is present. He also knows and looks forward to the day he goes home to heaven to be with Jesus. Like the psalmist, my dad is secure in God’s ability to care for him until the very end.

As I myself age, I sometimes feel fearful. My dad’s faith is an example to me. My dad continues to give thanks for the health he does have and praises God for it. He shows no sign of discouragement or fear. My dad tells me I do not have to fear the aging process. I will trust my earthly father and heavenly Father that this is true. God’s promises to me are good for a lifetime—from the beginning to the end.

Ezekiel 29:17-21; Psalm 70; Revelation 16:12-21; Luke 14:18-30

Friday, November 9

Ezekiel 12:12-28 *“Say to them, ‘The days are near when every vision will be fulfilled.’”* (v.23b)

People and society haven’t changed much over time. Even when reading the Old Testament, we can see that the culture back then was much as it is today. In the reading of Ezekiel, people were saying that the prophet’s warnings were for a time in the future and nothing to be worried about in the present. People of today say the same thing about the return of Christ.

Our culture today places an emphasis on doing what makes us feel good in the present. Yet God is very clear that Jesus will return soon. We are reminded that he will come as a “thief in the night” (1 Thessalonians 5:2). We don’t know the day or the hour. We are to be ready for his return at any moment.

Sometimes it seems as if God’s promise for this to happen is taking a long time. I am reminded by this passage that the time could be very close at hand. The question is not when, but am I ready. Are you ready?

Psalm 69; Revelation 17:1-18; Luke 13:31-35

Saturday, November 10

Psalm 75 *We praise you, God, we praise you, for your Name is near; people tell of your wonderful deeds. When the earth and all its people quake, it is I who hold its pillars firm.* (vv.1, 3)

When Peter began to sink after walking on the water to Jesus, he cried out for Jesus to help him. The verse in Matthew 14:29 says, “Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him.” It’s the same way for me. Like this psalm says, God is very near. He only waits for me to call out upon His name.

Verse 3 reminds me about the world I live in. I tend to worry after seeing news reports on television and reading the newspaper. The world around me seems to be out of control. It is unsettling to hear about so much political turmoil, war, and violence. Lately, it makes me want to ignore the news altogether. I’m thankful I have the choice to use the remote and tune out the negative voice of the world.

I try to concentrate on the fact that God is the one who holds the world together. Despite the world being chaotic, God is still in charge. When everything around me can seem like it’s falling apart, God has me firm in His grip. When I focus on God and not the unrest around me, I find the peace only He can give. God alone is my firm foundation.

Ezekiel 13:1-16; Psalm 76; Revelation 18:1-14; Luke 14:1-11

by Pamela Newton

Volume XVIII

November 11-17, 2018

Number 45

Sunday, November 11

1 Corinthians 14:1-12 *Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy.* (v.1 NIV)

Are we really to desire spiritual gifts? Is it right to approach God in hopes of being rewarded? At first blush the apostle’s words sound uncharacteristically selfish. What gives? Remember these verses flow right out of the thirteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians. That’s the chapter often read at weddings because it concerns love. But if you want to be precise, Paul’s words about love have more to do with the way church members get along

than they have to do with marriage. In fact, that famous “love chapter” is situated between two chapters dealing with the use of spiritual gifts in the local congregation. Just so the Corinthians are still tracking with Paul’s train of thought, he begins chapter fourteen reminding them to “follow the way of love.” In other words, if an other-centered concern characterizes our behavior, God delights in giving us gifts we can invest in the church. If, however, we are wanting to “speak in tongues” or do a miracle for the personal pleasure it provides us, we are acting more like spoiled children than maturing believers.

Ezekiel 14:1-14; Psalms 93, 96; Matthew 20:1-16

Monday, November 12

Revelation 18:15-24 *“Rejoice, saints and apostles and prophets! God has judged her for the way she treated you.”* (v.20b)

Veterans Day is a day we honor those who have been willing to dress for battle in the uniform of a particular branch of service. It’s a day we express gratitude for those who risked their lives and for those who gave their lives in order to protect our freedoms in a sinful world.

In today’s passage of Scripture we see God Himself on the front lines of battle. Aware of the bloodshed and injustice that has marked humanity through history; He is determined to settle the score once and for all. It’s D-Day as far as the Ancient of Days is concerned. Babylon (a symbolic name for godless powers that have ruled our world) is doomed. As you picture our Holy God as the ultimate Veteran, see Him with raised sword standing on your behalf. No injustice that you have suffered in your life will go unrequited. The just judge will eventually make it right. After all, His Son, with battled wounds evident on the palms of his hand and on his feet, attests to the fact that our Mighty Warrior must eventually win the battle. No wonder we are called to rejoice!

Joel 1:1-13; Psalm 80; Luke 14:12-24

Tuesday, November 13

Revelation 19:1-10 *Then the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!”* (v.9)

Don’t you love to go to weddings? If you know the bride or groom is a personal friend, it’s all the more meaningful. If you really like them, all the better. What is most fun is to attend a wedding where you have also been invited to a sit-down fancy dinner following the ceremony and reception. In such a setting you can’t help but feel like a VIP. The guests of honor are the center of attention. But because you’ve been included in their celebration, you experience the benefits of all their special occasion involves. The same

will be true some day for those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb.

Today's text provides us a peek through the keyhole of heaven. We see the most incredible party we'd be hard pressed to describe. More than a sit-down dinner, it's a fall-on-your-face smorgasbord of praise. The Savior decked out in all his glory will receive the gifts we freely offer as an expression of our love. And we will be there, because he invites "whosoever will come." But as with wedding invitations you receive in the mail, an RSVP is required.

Joel 1:15—2:11; Psalm 78:1-39; Luke 14:25-35

Wednesday, November 14

Revelation 19:11-21 *I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True.* (v.11a)

Saturday morning television in the fifties and sixties featured a masked cowboy and his Native American sidekick. As the William Tell Overture played in the background, the Lone Ranger galloped into view on his white horse "Silver." For those who had been wrongly treated and desired justice, the sound of Silver's hoofs heralded hope. For those who had broken the law, the approaching white horse and his rider was bad news. In much the same manner, in today's passage those who will see the white horse and his riders will not be happy campers. Unlike the black and white television show of a generation ago, the gruesome details sketched by the biblical writer are in living color. And yet what should our reaction be? For the believer in Christ, the lone response should be one of gratitude that we have been spared the imminent judgment that is coming for those who disregard the grace God has freely offered. No proud or haughty attitude is appropriate. Instead, we'd do well to get down off our high-horse and call unbelievers to reconsider their apathy to spiritual realities.

Joel 2:12-19; Psalm 119:97-120, 82; Luke 15:1-10

Thursday, November 15

James 1:1-15 *Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete not lacking anything.* (v.4)

The marathon of faith: when God calls, a gun sounds and a marathon begins. A life of service. A lifetime of measured steps, which (because of the distance to be covered) takes in stride the potholes along the way. Disappointment. Tears. Rejection. Exhaustion. Failure. Loss. A cross, I think Jesus called it. The One who finished first, who near the end of his own long-distance race (though winded) sighed, "I thirst!"

It was what he saw beyond the finish line that bade him stay his course. A faithful finish. And his Father's proud, "Well done!" It's true...persistence has its price tags. But also its rewards! Along the way, you learn endurance and, in the process, make a difference for Christ and his kingdom. Strong, not weak. Strong, not wilting. Not bailing out, but holding out to the end. Perseverance. Persistence. Going the distance. Finishing well.

Joel 2:21-27; Psalms 23, 27; Luke 15:1-2, 11-32

Friday, November 16

James 1:16-27 *Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.* (v.22)

Reading God's word is like looking in a mirror. It doesn't do much good if we don't act on what we discover. Our times of daily reflection don't mean much unless we put what we understand into practice.

The Greeks had a word for action. It's called *praxis*. If you could read the language in which the New Testament was originally written, you would notice that the book that follows John's Gospel is called "The Praxis of the Apostles." As important as it is to believe orthodox doctrine, it is far more essential to practice what we profess. Abstract truth never attracted anybody. But consistent compliance with the content of our creed will win a crowd any day. No wonder James insists that we take more than sermon notes on Sunday. There's a reason he calls us to take action. In other words, orthodoxy is good, but orthopraxy is better.

Joel 2:28—3:8; Psalm 88; Luke 16:1-9

Saturday, November 17

James 2:1-13 *But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers.* (v.9)

WWJD on a teenager's wristband stands for "What Would Jesus Do?" For kids who find themselves in settings where peer pressure could result in moral compromise, those four little letters can spell obedience to the royal law of God.

But it's not just outside the church walls where ethical dilemmas are posed. And it's not only kids who should be asking, "What would Jesus do?" According to James, that's a question we should consider every time we enter the sanctuary with the intention of worshiping the Lord.

Now, as then, people who gather on Sunday mornings come from diverse backgrounds. Some are well-to-do. Others are, well... you know. It's easy to spend time with those who are like us and ignore those who aren't. What we need to ask ourselves is this: "If Jesus were physically

present in our gathering, who would he be inclined to spend time with? What would he do?" Why not try that tomorrow?

Joel 3:9-17; Psalms 87, 90; Luke 16:10-18

by Greg Asimakoupoulos

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Sunday, November 18

Habakkuk 1:1—2:1 *I will stand my watch and station myself on the ramparts; I will look to see what he will say to me, and what answer I am to give to this complaint.* (2:1 NIV)

As I study the Book of Habakkuk, I realize little change has occurred in the world. The present, just as it was in Habakkuk's day, is filled with wickedness. I'm horrified by acts of terrorism. Everyday occurrences of shootings on the streets and human trafficking are just a few of the atrocities happening day-to-day. I'm appalled when we hear of a group of teenage boys who watch a man drown without calling for help. Instead, they use their smart phones to videotape the drowning as they laugh and jeer.

We ask ourselves, "What can we do about it?" Most of us don't have an answer, or, we answer, "We can pray." But can we, like Habakkuk ask God the hard questions? I read at the beginning of this book how Habakkuk cried out against the violence, lawlessness, and injustice he saw around him; God responded by explaining His plans to judge the wicked for their sinfulness.

Our hope is in the Lord—knowing the Almighty is in control and His righteous kingdom will be ours one day.

Psalms 66, 67; Philippians 3-13—4:1; Matthew 23:13-24

Monday, November 19

James 2:14-26 *What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them?* (v.14)

Margaret calls me "neighbor mom." I call her "neighbor daughter." Her family outgrew the house next door and moved a few miles away. Though no longer neighbors, I continue to witness her faith and caring deeds for others. When I moved in she welcomed me with cookies and flowers.

I noticed her hair style changed every couple of years. One day, her flowing black hair was cut into a cute style hugging her face. She told me when her hair gets long, she donates it to an organization who makes wigs for children with cancer. "It feels good to do something good, to give back,"

she told me. “It’s become my tradition—a simple way to help someone else.” Her hair helps restore a child’s self-confidence.

In Judges 16 we read the story of Sampson, how he was chosen by God to carry out a specific part of His plan. We, too, are chosen as part of God’s plan. Samson’s hair represented his strength. Margaret’s hair gives strength to someone else—strength to fight a battle.

Habakkuk 2:1-4, 9-20; Psalm 89:1-18; Luke 16:19-31

Tuesday, November 20

Psalm 99 *Exalt the LORD our God and worship at his holy mountain; For the LORD our God is holy.* (v.9)

What one word would you use to describe God?

I was once told of a woman who was hospitalized. As I remembered the story of how she comforted herself by reciting the alphabet blessing, I decided to give it a try. I found the exercise tougher than expected. To begin with, the words flowed from my mind. God is *awesome*. God is *blessed*. God is *creator*. My list started to bog down after God is *good*, God is *holy*, God is *immortal*, and I began to skip letters, my mind drawing blanks.

In Revelation 4:8, those who surround God’s throne speak one phrase continuously, day and night. “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is and is to come.” In Isaiah’s prophesy, he sees winged seraphs and they’re calling to each other, “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory” (see Isaiah 6:3).

Even though I’m unable to complete the alphabet, I’ve concluded there is one word to describe God ranking higher than all the others. Holy.

Habakkuk 3:1-18; Psalms 97, 100; James 3:1-12; Luke 17:1-10

Wednesday, November 21

Luke 17:11-19 *Then he said to him, “Rise and go; your faith has made you well.”* (v.19)

My grandmother was a woman of great faith. She lost her eyesight to cataracts when I was yet a child. Dad moved her small trailer to our backyard where Mom could care for her. There were no cataract surgeries performed at that time. Sadly, she could no longer crochet the delicate tablecloths or read her precious Bible. Each evening, as I sat at her feet reading how Jesus healed even the blind man, I started to ask, “Why not her?”

As I began to lose my young faith, Mom told me a story. She was born crippled. She raised her skirt and pointed out the unevenness below her knees. “Your grandmother wouldn’t accept me being crippled and she called in a faith healer to lay hands on me,” she said. “Her faith made me whole.”

Jesus told the leper, “Your faith has made you well.” In Luke 7:50, he told the woman anointing his feet with oil, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.” The Bible tells of many healed by the saving grace of our Lord.

Malachi 1:1, 6-14; Psalms 101, 109; James 3:13—4:12

Thursday, November 22

James 4:13—5:6 *Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.* (v.14)

When I envision my life as a mist, it appears briefly then vanishes. Like the stillness over a pond in the early dawn, the mist hovers above the surface then slowly rises toward the heavens. This peaceful scene, just as our lives, is interrupted by a sudden storm.

Some might spend their later years in an assisted living home, either by choice, or...not. The home is like living in a large family. The residents represent your brothers and sisters. And like any family, there can be disagreements and arguments. Perhaps you stomp to your room and slam the door. Your life is controlled by staff and, like your parents, they tell you when to eat, when to get up, and when to go to bed. You're free to leave...if someone drives you. And often there is gossip, even bullying in this home.

The chorus of a song says, “Lord, I offer my life to You. Everything I've been through, use it for Your glory.” The mist is rising. Offer your hand of friendship to your brothers and sisters.

Malachi 2:1-16; Psalm 105:1-22; Luke 17:20-37

Friday, November 23

James 5:7-12 *Don't grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!* (v.9)

The word *grumble* or *grumbling* is mentioned seven times in Exodus 16. Despite the Lord's provision of manna and quail, the Israelites continued to grumble. We, too, grumble—never happy with what the Lord has provided. It appears we're a world of discontent.

Several years ago, I watched my neighbor children trudge down the driveway, backpacks and long faces in place; their faces resembled expressionless emoji with straight lines for mouths. “Have a good day,” I waved. They gave me a glance and climbed into the SUV. “Not morning people,” I mumbled.

It struck me how, too often, when we don't want to do something, everyone knows about it. Even though our words can be toxic when we grumble, our looks can be even more unnerving to the receiver. When I was a teenager, Mom told me daggers shot from my eyes when I was angry. And

I remember *the look* given by Dad. Not a word need be spoken to grumble against another.

Whether it's words or looks, remember the Judge is standing at the door.

Malachi 3:1-12; Psalm 102; Luke 18:1-8

Saturday, November 24

Psalm 108 *I will praise you, LORD, among the nations; I will sing of you among the peoples. For great is your love, higher than the heavens; your faithfulness reaches the skies.* (vv.3-4)

Each morning, I stand at the open window lifting my eyes to the skies; the dawning barely visible through the leaves on the branches of the oak trees. I talk to God. I praise Him. I thank Him for blessings and birds already deep in conversation. I pray His healing hand continue to lay upon my family. I thank Him for each blooming flower and for Thanksgiving week. Thursday, Americans gathered around tables to celebrate the harvest. Although the history of Thanksgiving goes back much further, George Washington declared it a national holiday in 1789. This was designated a public day of thanksgiving and prayer.

Today is my birthday. I was born on the 4th day after Thanksgiving and the date of the 24th sometimes falls on a Thursday. Thus, the celebration of Thanksgiving always included my birthday. "My heart, O LORD, is steadfast; I will sing and make music with all my soul" (v.1).

Although Thanksgiving was set aside as a day to thank the Lord for blessings, let's not let it be the only day we praise God.

Malachi 3:13—4:6; Psalm 107:33-43; James 5:13-20; Luke 18:9-14

by Shirley J. Conley

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Number 47

Sunday, November 25

Zechariah 9:9-16 *They will be full like a bowl used for sprinkling the corners of the altar.* (v.15b NIV)

Have you ever been sprinkled with an aspergillum? It is a wand filled with holy water that the bishop or priest shakes to bless something such as an altar, a new car, people... Perhaps you dip your finger into the fonts upon entering the church and make the sign of the cross over your chest. Both symbolize being washed of your sins. Just like our clothes and our bodies, our souls need regular washing.

But how can *we* be like the bowl used for sprinkling the altar? We are called to be vessels in which the Holy Spirit lives. If we are “full of ourselves” there doesn’t leave much room for him, does it? But when we empty ourselves and are open to being filled by the Living Water, we become a blessing to others, and to God. Having been cleansed of our sins, we can then lead others to be washed and blessed as well.

Psalm 118; 1 Peter 3:13-22; Matthew 21:1-13

Monday, November 26

Psalm 106:1-18 *But they soon forgot what he had done and did not wait for his plan to unfold.* (v.13)

Tired of turkey leftovers yet?

The Hebrew people, months after being miraculously rescued at the Red Sea and freed from slavery, now whined because they didn’t have food and drink in the desert. Surrounded by herds of goats, sheep, and a few cattle, how could they think that?

I can’t be too down on the Hebrews, can you? I think we have all had times when we didn’t wait for God’s plans to unfold. He didn’t meet our timetable, or our expectations. Sure, He’d been there for us in the past and proved His timing is perfect, but that was then. This is now.

At times, I’ve been so caught up in my own angst over a situation that I failed to see the blessings right in front of me. Just as the Hebrews did. Oh, me of little faith.

Lord, nudge me to praise You in each situation and to count my blessings as I wait on You to act so You don’t have to discipline me as you did Your people in the wilderness.

Zechariah 10:1-12; Galatians 6:1-10; Luke 18:15-30

Tuesday, November 27

1 Corinthians 3:10-23 *By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care.* (v.10)

I was tired. I’d been president of our diocesan churchwomen’s cabinet for four years, overseeing women in over four dozen congregations. One day, while driving to work I noticed a flock of geese flying in the typical V formation. I saw the lead goose fall back and squeeze in between two others near the front. Immediately, one of the other geese took over as lead. I knew God told me to fall back in line, but stay close enough to guide the new leader, who by the way, is doing an amazing job. It gave me time to do what God then called me to do.

When Moses became overwhelmed, his father-in-law, Jethro, advised him to divvy up the duties (Exodus 18:17-22). In Acts 6, when the apostles felt the same way, they chose sub leaders. God will raise up whom He has equipped to serve. But sometimes, that means we, who have been serving for a long time, need to stand aside. How can we take on a new adventure when our hands are clutching on the old?

Zechariah 11:4-17; Psalms 120, 121, 122, 123; Luke 18:31-43

Wednesday, November 28

Luke 19:1-10 *He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. (v.3)*

I am short, so I get Zacchaeus. I recall one time being in a crowd of kneecaps. Sounds swirled around me, but I had no idea what was happening. Then my dad lifted me up to perch on his shoulders. Suddenly I could see the parade. What a difference.

Zacchaeus is bolder than I often am. He took the initiative to get a better view. He climbed a tree to seek a glimpse of Jesus. There have been times when I have not been able to look beyond my own circumstances. Tension crowds in, blocking my view of God's goodness and mercy in my life. Then the Shepherd comes, and lifts this little lost sheep onto his shoulders. He holds on to me tightly, lets me glimpse at what "the big picture" is, and waits as I gawk in awe.

The world is a much better place when seen from the viewpoint of being in the arms of the Savior.

Zechariah 12:1-10; Psalm 119:145-176; Ephesians 1:3-14

Thursday, November 29

Zechariah 13:1-9 *In the whole land," declares the LORD, "two-thirds will be struck down and perish; yet one-third will be left in it. This third I will put into the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. (vv.8-9)*

So many people are claiming we are in the end times. Perhaps. All the signs are there. Natural disasters, people turning from God and engaging in lustful living are Biblically predicted. Have things truly changed? Could it be we've been in the end times for two millennia? Not to sound flippant, but only God knows.

Paul wrote to the Thessalonians that the Day of the Lord would come like a thief in the night (1 Thessalonians 5:1-2). In Matthew 25, Jesus told the parable of the bridesmaids always being ready for the bridegroom to come. In the ancient world, once a girl was betrothed the groom could come to claim her at any time, be it days or years. Her job was to wait and prepare. So it is with us.

Whether Jesus comes tomorrow or a hundred years from now, it is not our call. It lies with God, as it should. In the meantime, we have our assignment—go tell the world about Jesus and baptize new believers (Matthew 28:20).

Psalms 131, 132, 133; Ephesians 1:15-23; Luke 19:11-27

Friday, November 30

Luke 19:28-40 *Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. (v.32)*

I took on a new task, one to which I felt fairly confident God had called me. However, I didn't know how I would accomplish it. New to the city, we joined a mission church. The priest came up to me on the third Sunday after we'd joined to tell me God told him I should form and lead the outreach committee. Me? I had just barely found the grocery store! But I prayed on it, reluctantly said yes, and told God, "Okay, you're going to have to lead me and show me what to do." He did, each step of the way. All I had to do was follow directions.

Sometimes God asks us to do something we just don't understand. The old adage, "Ours is not to question why, ours is to do or die," comes to mind. When we die to our own agenda and follow God's instead, He will lay everything out for us.

What colt has He asked you to go find, untie, and bring for Him to use to His glory?

Zechariah 14:1-11; Psalms 140, 142; Romans 15:7-13

Saturday, December 1

Philippians 2:1-11 *Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. (vv.1-2)*

It's New Year's Eve for Christians. Tomorrow begins Advent—a period of reflection and preparation. A good time to make a few resolutions. As I read Paul's advice, I know I have some improvements to make. I am sure we all do, if we are honest about it.

It is also an occasion to look at the upcoming year and determine how your church can better fulfill the Great Commission in Matthew 28. (See yesterdays' devotional.) How will you help your fellow parishioners tell others about Christ, treat each other with tenderness and compassion, and be like-minded in learning and teaching the Good News?

In today's reading from Luke, Jesus wept over Jerusalem and then cleansed the temple from those who had other intents besides worship. I wonder how he'd react if he walked in on my congregation tomorrow? How about yours? It is something to ponder and pray about as we begin this holy season leading up to his birth.

Zechariah 14:12-21; Psalms 137, 144; Luke 19:41-48

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