

Good News Daily

NOVEMBER 5 – DECEMBER 2, 2017

Volume XVII

November 5-11, 2017

Number 45

Sunday, November 5

Nehemiah 5:1-19 *But because I feared God, I did not act that way.* (v.15c NLT)

Nehemiah was courageous and concerned about others in a self-centered culture bent on amassing fortunes. He was obedient to God in deed as well as word. God made the difference to Nehemiah, and he gave God credit for his character. For how many parts of our lives can we give God the credit—the glory?

We can say, “Because of God...” I awaken to the sunrise, end my day with the setting sun, hear songs of birds—enjoy creation. Can we also, like Nehemiah, make Father God our role model? Can we say, “because of God I...” am honest, honorable, loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, faithful, gentle and self-controlled? Have I let God mold and shape me in the image of Jesus, or am I won over by the culture around me? In the evening, can we take a self-inventory asking, “What did I do or not do, say or not say, today “because of God”?

Psalms 24, 29; Acts 20:7-12; Luke 12:22-31

Monday, November 6

Psalms 56 *But when I am afraid I will put my trust in you.* (v.3)

Reading the newspaper, watching TV, or listening to radio, we can't escape the tumult of violence erupting around us. Fear, our natural reaction, may readily arise from deep within. Our daily lives often offer up fearful crises—balancing the checkbook, raising children, job layoffs, relational challenges. For me, it can be a moment by moment decision that “I will put my trust in you (O, Lord).” Without that decision, I am blinded by the fear inducing assaults of daily life. When I repeat out loud the words, “when I am afraid I will put my trust in you,” I remember I am not alone. I have a wise, powerful, loving Father whose Son died for me, and whose Spirit is within me. Like Hagar I can say, “You are the God who sees me” (Genesis 16:13).

Nehemiah 6:1-19; Psalms 57, 58; Revelation 10:1-11; Matthew 13:36-43

Tuesday, November 7

Nehemiah 12:27-31a, 42b-47 *“I led the leaders of Judah to the top of the wall and organized two large choirs to give thanks. The women and children also participated in the celebration, and the joy of the people of Jerusalem could be heard far away.”* (vv.31a, 43b)

People were flooding back from exile. Nehemiah was rebuilding Jerusalem’s wall. Jerusalem was being resettled. I picture the leaders atop the wall under construction, the women and children gathered, all singing for the joy of coming home to Jerusalem; the home for many hearts, for many years. At least for a season, a people finally in harmony with their land, each other, and their God. Their joy “could be heard far away.” They broadcasted unity, obedience, and faith in God.

Can we, too, stand on our walls, give thanks in unity and be heard far away praising? Can we stand on our walls making choices in our lives that model our faith? Perhaps, action really does speak louder than words! Our most powerful witness is in the way we live our lives.

Psalms 61, 62; Revelation 11:1-19; Matthew 13:44-52

Wednesday, November 8

Matthew 13:53-58 *“And so he did only a few miracles there because of their unbelief.”* (v.58)

Jesus went home to Nazareth. Many there could not see beyond the child he once was or the familiarity of his family still living ordinary lives in Nazareth. They didn’t see the God who came down to live among us. They heard him teach, were amazed at his wisdom. But they doubted: “...they refused to believe in him” (v.57b). So, “He did only a few miracles.” The people of Jesus’ hometown were blind to the truth that the Messiah had indeed come. His neighbors knew him as a man, but that was all!

How well do I know him, trust in him, and follow him? Am I a neighbor, observing and critiquing or a believer seeing, loving, obeying, receiving, and following?

Nehemiah 13:4-22; Psalm 72; Revelation 12:1-12

Thursday, November 9

Ezra 7:1-26 *“Be careful to provide whatever the God of heaven demands for his Temple, for why should we risk bringing God’s anger...?”* (v.23)

Then the temple was a building in Jerusalem. Today, “Don’t you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God?” (1 Corinthians 6:19). This permission/order to

“provide” was made by the king to Ezra, “a scribe well versed in the Law of Moses” (v.6a).

Much of the Law of Moses discusses honor, truth, integrity, and respect. What if we used it as a guide for care of our bodies and souls—the temple of the Holy Spirit—as individuals and collectively as the Church, the Body of Christ? For “why should we risk bringing God’s anger?” What if we recognized the truth and necessity of respecting and honoring the temple God declares us to be? What might we change? What blessings might result?

Psalms 70, 71; Revelation 14:1-13; Matthew 14:1-12

Friday, November 10

Psalm 69 *O, God, you know how foolish I am; my sins cannot be hidden from you. Don't let those who trust in you be ashamed because of me, O Sovereign LORD of Heaven's Armies.* (vv.5-6a)

David, king of Israel—but with a long history of giving in to his desires and betraying the Law of Moses. David, so very human—yet God chose his line as the lineage of Jesus. Many of the psalms reveal David’s heartbreak when he catches himself in sin—a betrayal of his Heavenly Father. David recognized the influence he had as leader, as an example to others.

David was chosen. We, too, are God’s chosen people. Chosen...not last chosen for the soccer team or as a last-minute fill-in at a dinner party...but chosen by God the Father. What foolish choices of mine “cannot be hidden” from God or might lead to mistakes or embarrassment for others and betray my responsibility as one of God’s chosen? As David begs for rescue from his own foolish choices, so can we.

Ezra 7:27-28, 8:21-36; Revelation 15:1-8; Matthew 14:13-21

Saturday, November 11

Revelation 17:1-14 *“And his called and chosen and faithful ones will be with him.”* (v.14b)

It’s a frightening scene: a great prostitute is defiling the land. People “who belong to this world” will be deceived. God’s called, chosen, faithful ones will be with Him. How will we choose? Are we willing to prepare our hearts, minds, bodies, and souls to be faithful? Will we stop and listen for God’s call on our lives? Listen for His plan? Resist the world’s message to “do it my way”? Will we resist the encouragement we see everywhere, including store window displays, to pursue the belief that “it’s about me”

and instead embrace the message of the song, “It’s all about you, Jesus”?
And once we accept the call, will we be faithful?

Ezra 9:1-15; Psalms 75, 76; Matthew 14:22-36

by Barbara Maybee

Volume XVII

November 12-18, 2017

Number 46

Sunday, November 12

Luke 14:12-24 *“But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”* (v.13 NIV)

This passage reminds me of the life of author and Catholic theologian Henri Nouwen, who died in 1996. After holding tenured faculty positions at the divinity schools of both Yale and Harvard, Nouwen felt that his academic career had lost its meaning as a ministry. He gave it up to spend the remaining years of his life as pastor of Daybreak, the L’Arche community for the mentally disabled in Toronto. Its founder envisioned L’Arche as a home where handicapped people would be valued, contributing members of small communities. Nouwen’s biographer wrote, “At L’Arche, Jesus’ friendship with the outcast and marginalized is the model for community: Emmanuel, God-among-us.”

Nouwen never became entangled with status and prestige even while teaching at Ivy League universities. He later wrote in his book *Road to Daybreak* about his experiences: “If we truly want to see the glory of God, we must move downward with Jesus. This is the deepest reason for living in solidarity with poor, oppressed, and handicapped people. They are the ones through whom God’s glory can manifest itself to us. They show us the way to God, the way to salvation.”

Ezra 10:1-17; Psalms 93, 96; Acts 24:10-21

Monday, November 13

Psalms 80 *You have made us a source of contention to our neighbors and our enemies mock us.* (v.6)

Have you ever been laughed at? It doesn’t feel very good to realize that other people think you’re stupid, bumbling, ignorant, or a failure at whatever you did that made them laugh. The feeling you have inside is that you want to shrink away from the crowd and disappear.

However, I can think of at least three lessons I have learned from experiences with humiliation. First, it’s relative. What one crowd considers

as a stupid thing to do, another group of people will consider courageous. Second, such an experience will make you tougher, more courageous, and less likely to worry about other people's opinion. Finally, humiliation gives you more compassion and sensitivity to others you meet who are objects of ridicule.

Humiliation is an emotion caused by suddenly shrinking to one's normal proportions. It just brings us back to the opinion we should have had of ourselves to begin with.

Nehemiah 9:1-15; Revelation 18:1-8; Matthew 15:1-20

Tuesday, November 14

Revelation 18:9-20 *"They will say, 'The fruit you longed for is gone from you. All your riches and splendor have vanished, never to be recovered.'"* (v.14)

It's difficult not to become preoccupied with "things" that will eventually disappear. A wealthy and influential man in the town where I grew up owned 1,800 acres of land. Just a few weeks ago I heard from a mutual friend that he had died and left all the land and little cash to his only son. As a result, the son had to sell all of the land at an IRS tax sale to pay the \$3 million in inheritance taxes.

As Sam Walton's wife admitted, "I kept saying, Sam, we're making a good living. Why go out and expand so much more? The stores are getting farther and farther away. After the seventeenth store, though, I realized there wasn't going to be any stopping it."

Materialism isn't confined to the wealthy, however. I own thousands of items of furniture, clothing, food and personal care items, electronic gadgets, tools, books, and more. Each of these items requires time to be cleaned, maintained, used, or consumed at some point. When we spend all our time taking care of our "things", do we have any time for people? Remember that God expects us to enjoy people and use things—not the other way around.

Nehemiah 9:26-38; Psalm 78:1-39; Matthew 15:21-28

Wednesday, November 15

Matthew 15:29-39 *Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, or they may collapse on the way."* (v.32)

A man got up in the middle of the pastor's sermon and walked out. After church, his embarrassed wife sought to explain to the pastor, "I hope

you don't think he disagreed with what you said. He just tends to walk in his sleep.”

In the story of the feeding of the multitudes, the most neglected angle is that people actually sat and listened to Jesus for three days until they were out of food. Think of it—three days of sitting and listening to one person speak.

That may be why we can read the gospels over and over again, hear hundreds of sermons and read dozens of books about Jesus, and never tire of him. After many, many years as a Christian, I can still say he is the most fascinating person I have ever met. The source of wisdom that his life and teachings reveal is unending.

Nehemiah 7:73—8:3, 5-18; Psalm 119:97-120; Revelation 18:21-24

Thursday, November 16

Psalm 23 *You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.* (v.5b)

If your church uses olive oil for special blessings and anointing, then it follows a practice as old as the Scriptures. In the ancient Near East, anointing persons with oil was widespread for medicinal and spiritual purposes. The Hebrew word *shemen*, translated as “oil” in this passage, is used 190 times in the Old Testament and usually refers to olive oil. According to the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, olive oil was applied on wounds (Isaiah 1:6, Mark 6:13, Luke 10:34, James 5:14). Specially prepared oils were used to anoint the head (Psalm 23:5, Matthew 26:7, Luke 7:46) and feet (Luke 7:28, Luke 7:46, John 12:3). Anointing with oil set persons and objects apart and dedicated them to divine service.

The beloved Psalm 23 was written by David during a time when he was fleeing from Saul. He had been wandering from place to place. He was in exile from his own people and living among strangers. David's sense of anointing by God during this time gave him a sense of blessed protection and helped prepare him for his future leadership role.

1 Chronicles 10:1-14; Psalms 27, 83; Revelation 19:1-10; Matthew 16:1-12

Friday, November 17

Psalm 88 *For my soul is full of trouble and my life draws near the grave. I am counted among those who go down to the pit; I am like a man without strength.* (vv.3-4)

Psalm 88 reveals a tremendous outpouring of pain and anguish. The Christian faith does not seek to deny the reality of pain, evil, or suffering, but embraces them as part of life. I've learned that pain isn't something to be avoided at all costs. I encounter situations when it is healthier to endure the pain or unpleasantness that it brings than to run from it. Suffering has

also taught me to talk about the situations that cause it. My experience can bring comfort to other people, just like the psalmist's written record of his anguish has since given comfort and solace to millions.

Martin E. Marty, the great church historian and spiritual writer, said that the idea for his book *A Cry of Absence: Reflections for the Winter of the Heart* was conceived from Psalm 88. He wrote the book shortly after his wife of 40 years died of a terminal illness. While he was reading some psalms to her one evening, she asked why he skipped Psalm 88. He replied, "I didn't think you could take it tonight." She asked him to read it anyway and after he had finished, she replied, "I need that kind the most."

1 Chronicles 11:1-25; Revelation 19:11-16; Matthew 16:13-20

Saturday, November 18

Matthew 16:21-28 *Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." (v.24)*

You have probably heard dozens of sermons on this passage, which is rich in meaning. Quaker theologian Richard Foster calls it "the touchstone for the biblical understanding of submission" in his famous book *Celebration of Discipline*. Submission is the ability to lay down the terrible burden of always needing to get our own way. He writes, "The obsession to demand that things go the way we want them to go is one of the greatest bondages in human society today. People will spend weeks, months, even years in a perpetual stew because some little thing did not go as they wished."

Most church fights and splits occur because people do not have the freedom to give in to each other. Everyone believes that he or she is fighting for a sacred principle.

Recently I had a dispute with a relative. Although I believe I was right, I chose to drop the matter because it wasn't worth damaging the relationship over a matter with no long-term consequences. Denying yourself sometimes means "letting go" of a lesser situation so that we can attend to the greater work of following Jesus Christ.

1 Chronicles 13:1-14; Psalms 87, 90; Revelation 20:1-6

by David E. Sumner

Sunday, November 19

Psalm 66 *Come and see what God has done: he is awesome in his deeds among mortals. Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will tell you what he has done for me.* (vv.5, 16 NRSV)

This past year, I moved from Orlando, where I had lived for the past 16 years, to Daytona Beach. Initially, it was awesome! I spent evenings walking on the beach, enjoying the beauty of God's creation. Then the honeymoon period ended and I hit a wall of deep loneliness, wondering if I made a huge mistake.

The last thing I felt was gratitude. I imagine that the Israelites felt similarly as they wandered through the desert after leaving Egypt. Sure, God had done wondrous things, but was it a mistake to leave Egypt?

In my desert, I chose to start practicing gratitude even when my heart wasn't feeling it. Every night, before going to sleep, I wrote down three things that I was thankful for from that day. Sometimes it came easily; other days, I had to think long and hard before writing anything down (there are only so many times you can be thankful for your cat). But, over time, practicing gratitude became gratitude. I was transformed.

No matter what season you are currently experiencing, will you choose to remember the things the Lord has done for you today?

1 Chronicles 14:1-17; Psalm 67; Acts 28:14b-23; Luke 16:1-13

Monday, November 20

1 Chronicles 15:1-29 *So all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the LORD with shouting, to the sound of the horn, trumpets, and cymbals, and made loud music on harps and lyres.* (v.28)

Most Sundays I attend a traditional church service—hymns and organ, choir and chanting. I like it. I like the stillness and the quiet. I like the space to reflect and pray. I like the hymns that teach me how to think about God. But sometimes I want what David is creating here in this passage from 1 Chronicles. In a time when paper and ink was rare, the writer uses 29 verses to recount how David assembled an orchestra. The text lists the names of those who play harp, cymbal, lyre, and trumpet and those who sing and shout in praise of God. In the final verse, we see King David “leaping and dancing” on the streets as he accompanied the tabernacle (the presence of God) into the city.

Sometimes we need the quiet. But, sometimes, we ought to make loud music and shout in worship. Why? Because Christ has died; Christ is risen; and Christ will come again!

Psalm 89:1-18; Revelation 20:7-15; Matthew 17:1-13

Tuesday, November 21

Psalm 100 *Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth. Worship the LORD with gladness; come into his presence with singing. Know that the LORD is God. It is he that made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.* (vv.1-3)

The Lord gave me a decent voice. And I love to sing, especially to worship the Lord. But some of my favorite moments of worship are when I am with my friend Kurt. Kurt cannot carry a tune. I think he may be slightly tone deaf. But Kurt loves to make a joyful noise to the Lord. And I love to hear him sing because I know he is singing with all his heart. I think the Lord likes to hear Kurt sing too.

The command in this verse is not to sing if you have a really good voice. The command is to make a joyful noise to the Lord, no matter what that might sound like. We sing because “the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more” (Revelation 21:3-4).

Therefore, friend, sing! Sing with all your heart (no matter what you think you sound like)!

1 Chronicles 16:7-36; Psalms 97, 99; Revelation 21:1-8; Matthew 17:14-21

Wednesday, November 22

Psalm 101 *I will walk with integrity of heart within my house; I will not set before my eyes anything that is base. Perverseness of heart shall be far from me; I will know nothing of evil.* (vv.2b-3, 4b)

In today’s world, it is not easy to control what is set before our eyes. There is hardly a television show or movie that does not contain explicit content. Even driving down the road, our eyes are assaulted with things that are base. Our temptation is to think that we can handle these things, that they do not influence us. So we watch the show or movie; we listen to the music; we read the book. But these things impact our hearts more than we realize.

A couple of months ago, I decided to quit setting base things before my eyes. I set parental restrictions on my Netflix and Hulu accounts. I chose different books to read. The impact? My heart feels different, almost lighter. Evil and temptation have felt farther away. It is good.

Right now, take a moment and think about what you set before your eyes. What might God be asking you to walk away from? Try it. I dare you.

1 Chronicles 20:1-8; Psalm 109; Revelation 21:9-21; Matthew 17:22-27

Thursday, November 23

Matthew 18:1-9 *“If your hand or foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to enter life maimed or lame than to have two hands or two feet and to be thrown into the eternal fire.”* (v.8)

Sometimes the words of Jesus are hard to swallow. This is one of those times. When Jesus confuses me, I have to ask myself, what is he saying and why is he saying it this way? I bet that Jesus is being particularly graphic here on purpose, to make a point. He deliberately exaggerates so that we will grasp the worth of what he is offering us. Even our hands and feet are not as valuable as eternal life in his kingdom. If you have not yet done so, take a moment to read today’s Revelation passage. Soak in that image for a second—the closeness of God, the beauty and wonder of the kingdom, the freedom we are being offered.

Friend, as you give thanks today for all your blessings, will you value God’s kingdom over all those things? Take a moment now to offer God thanksgiving for eternal life through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

1 Chronicles 21:1-27; Psalm 105:1-22; Revelation 21:22—22:5

Friday, November 24

1 Chronicles 22:1-19 *“Now, my son, the LORD be with you, so that you may succeed in building the house of the LORD your God, as he has spoken concerning you. Be strong and of good courage. Do not be afraid or dismayed.”* (vv.11, 13b).

God calls people to participate in His work in the world. God called Solomon to build a sanctuary for His name among the people of Israel. God has called me to see a Jesus-centered community on every college campus in Florida. As I have recently reflected on calling and leadership, I am struck by how many times God calls those who are afraid. Moses literally begged God to choose someone else. The Lord has to tell Joshua three times to be strong and courageous. Elijah gets so scared that he hides out in the desert for months. God calls scared people.

Just last week, I heard God calling me to something new. And I sat there, literally trembling in terror. Can I do this? Am I the right person? What if I fail? What if I disappoint people? What if...what if...what if? But as I listened to God, I heard these same words that David spoke to Solomon, “The Lord [is] with you...Be strong and of good courage.”

Friend, how is God calling you to join his work in the world? Even if you do it scared, do it!

Psalm 102; Revelation 22:6-13; Matthew 18:10-20

Saturday, November 25

Revelation 22:14-21 *The Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” And let everyone who hears say, “Come.” And let everyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift.* (v.17)

We live in a thirsty world. In my work with college students, I see all the ways they try to quench their thirsts. They chase vocational success, romantic relationships, altruistic significance, the approval of others—peers, parents, professors. If we are honest, we who are “grown up” are not that much different. I find myself pursuing the same thirst quenchers—love, acceptance, success. But at the end of the day, none of those things satisfy. When I stop long enough, I realize I am still thirsty. And then God reminds me where I can get the water of life. So I return to Jesus, usually with tears, confessing my thirst and my need for the water of life. And at the end of that day, I am satisfied. My heart is at peace, my soul is at rest, satisfied.

Friend, hear these words, “Let everyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift.” Will you stop chasing other thirst quenchers and come to the living water?

Isaiah 65:17-25; Psalms 107:33-43, 108; Matthew 18:21-35

by Kim Koi

Volume XVII

November 26-December 2, 2017

Number 48

Sunday, November 26

Romans 15:5-13 *May God, who gives this patience and encouragement, help you live in complete harmony with each other, as is fitting for followers of Christ Jesus.* (v.5 NLT)

I must receive before I can give. When I receive the patience and encouragement Jesus Christ has to give me, only then will I have the character to live in harmony with others. I appreciate the word “harmony” because it reminds me of music. Harmony is achieved when voices are on key and blending together to create something that is pleasing to our ear. Living in complete harmony doesn’t require that we all sing alike. Harmony comes when even with our differences we are on key with God’s Spirit so that our melody is pleasing to Him and we achieve His plans and purposes.

“When I’m far away from home and the cold wind starts to blow, when I’m empty and alone, I turn to you. When there’s hardness in my heart and I can’t see the truth, and I’m wandering in the dark, I turn to you. And here in your holy presence it’s all that I can do. I turn to you, Jesus!” (I Turn to You by Selah).

Isaiah 19:19-25; Psalm 118; Luke 19:11-27

Monday, November 27

1 Peter 1:1-12 *God the Father knew you and chose you long ago, and his Spirit has made you holy. As a result, you have obeyed him and have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ. May God give you more and more grace and peace. (v.2)*

Here is another example of receiving that enables me to give. If I receive (accept) that God chose me and, because of His holiness has made me holy, then I can obey and be cleansed from my sinful nature. Being chosen, accepted, finding a home in God’s family is a privileged place above any other that I could ask for. It is better than being accepted into any club, profession, or earthly family. Because of God’s choosing I am the richest, most privileged celebrity in the kingdom.

“My Child, blessed and favored are you. I hold you in my arms, safe and secure, your life hidden in mine. Know how completely this position will satisfy your hungry heart. Be still and stay.”

Joel 3:1-2, 9-17; Psalm 106:1-18; Matthew 9:1-12

Tuesday, November 28

Matthew 19:13-22 *The young man said to Him, “All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack? (v.20 NKJ)*

When I come to Jesus Christ and begin to trust him with my entire life, old ways don’t feel comfortable any longer. Activities, entertainment, books, even some friends just don’t “fit”. I’m convicted by the Spirit that unkind, judgmental thoughts and words have no place in my new life. This new life of putting God’s agenda first requires a new trusting innocence. My new nature must reflect the holiness and righteousness of Christ. Kindness, compassion, and truth need to cover me.

Lord Jesus, thank you that our new life will last forever because it comes from your eternal living word and what you have accomplished on our behalf.

Nahum 1:1-13; Psalms 120, 121, 122, 123; 1 Peter 1:13-25

Wednesday, November 29

1 Peter 2:1-10 *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a consecrated nation, a [special] people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies [the wonderful deeds and virtues and perfections] of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. Once you were not a people [at all], but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.* (vv.9-10 AMP)

What darkness has God brought us out of? Consider what life was like before we knew His great love for us. Now that we have accepted that Jesus has saved us by his great loving sacrifice on the cross, we can walk in the light that truth brings. The power of his resurrection gives us the constant presence of his Spirit so that we can continue to walk in that marvelous light. We are chosen, consecrated, called. That's the Good News!

Today I celebrate my birthday. The day God planned for me to be born. He celebrates my uniqueness. His plans are perfect for me. I think I'll go skip on the beach.

Obadiah 15-21; Psalm 119:145-176; Matthew 19:23-30

Thursday, November 30

1 Peter 2:11-25 *Once you were like sheep who wandered away. But now you have turned to your Shepherd, the Guardian of your souls.* (v.25 NLT)

This comical figure of speech that Scripture often uses brings a smile to my face. To be likened to a sheep doesn't really sound like a compliment and it's not! Sheep are pretty witless. They can't defend themselves. They often fall over and can't get up without assistance. Sheep never walk in a straight line. If they "wander away" they can't get back without someone leading them. It's no wonder God calls himself a Shepherd, the Guardian of my soul. I wander away to many distractions: food, entertainment, people, even ministry can be a distraction if it's not lead by the Spirit. So today my prayer is: Lord Jesus, my Shepherd, I am sorry for wandering, I want to only follow you. I ask for your protection and guidance. Please catch me if I fall and keep me walking in a straight line aware of your presence with me every moment. Thank you for all your love and peace.

Zephaniah 3:1-13; Psalms 131, 132, 133; Matthew 20:1-16

Friday, December 1

Isaiah 24:14-23 *They [who have escaped and remain] raise their voices, they shout for joy; They rejoice from the [Mediterranean] Sea in the majesty*

of the Lord. Therefore honor and glorify the Lord in the east [in the region of light], The name of the Lord, the God of Israel [honor His name], In the coastlands and islands of the [Mediterranean] Sea. From the ends of the earth we hear songs, "Glory and honor to the Righteous One!" (vv.14-16a AMP)

Honor and glory are often words that are used for a very select few in our culture. As I write this, the Summer Olympics are just closing. We honor athletes with medals and endorsements for sought after products. Often these select few disappoint us with demonstrations of poor character, but God never disappoints. His character is forever right and true. As a response to His righteousness we are designed by God to worship Him forever.

Lord, I am so grateful that You are worthy of glory and honor and that You have chosen to love me. It's a love that accepts me as I am but is forever transforming me into who You designed me to be. I'm thankful that You are always with me. In every circumstance, You never leave. All the things that challenge me today—relationships, health, schedules—you are with me.

Psalms 140, 142; 1 Peter 3:13—4-6; Matthew 20:17-28

Saturday, December 2

1 Peter 4:7-19 The end of the world is coming soon. Therefore, be earnest and disciplined in your prayers. Most important of all, continue to show deep love for each other, for love covers a multitude of sins. Cheerfully share your home with those who need a meal or a place to stay. (vv.7-9 NLT)

Wow! There's some clear directions: pray, love, share.

Today I am praying for a friend who has stage 4 cancer and his daughter, also suffering with cancer, is in her last days of this life. Lord Jesus, they need you. Please heal them in heart and body.

Loving others takes so many different forms. Today I'm taking a teenage granddaughter out to lunch. She is navigating a difficult transition in her life right now. I want to remind her of God's love and bring her hope that He has a great plan for her life.

Later I will meet a friend who is struggling financially and share some needed resources. Lord Jesus, please supply all her needs out of your abundance.

Almighty Father, please continue to show us how to pray, love, share and live a life that pleases You. Forgive us for all the times we fail to

respond to Your gentle call. We want to love You with whole-heartedness,
love ourselves and love others according to Your command.

Micah 7:11-20; Psalms 137, 144; Matthew 20:29-34

by Charlene Laird

Used with permission from the
BIBLE READING FELLOWSHIP
PO Box 380, Winter Park, FL 32790
www.biblereading.org

ST. JOHN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH
2401 COLLEGE AVENUE
FORT WORTH, TEXAS 76110
www.stjohnsfortworth.com