

Good News Daily

February 3-March 2

Volume XIX

February 3-9, 2019

Number 5

Sunday, February 3

Psalm 29 *“The LORD will give strength to his people; the LORD blesses his people with peace.”* (v.11 NIV)

It’s no fun getting old! Getting old is not for sissies! How often have I heard those and similar words from friends lately? Our bodies seem to disintegrate as the aches and pains intrude.

The crunch of metal on metal and unexpected thud stunned me. The young man approached my driver’s side window. “Are you ok?” he asked. My angry retort was, “Why did you hit me? I’m sick. I’m on my way to the doctor. I don’t have time for this!” All I could think of was, I would miss my appointment. No matter how many times I vow not to ask the Lord *why*, I still do.

I often relate my life to David’s. I can’t simply touch the hem of Christ’s garment and be healed from my infirmities (see Matthew 14:34-36), so I cling to the words of David: “The LORD will give strength to his people; the LORD blesses his people with peace.”

Isaiah 51:9-16; Psalm 24; Hebrews 11:8-16; John 7:14-31

Monday, February 4

Psalm 56 *When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. In God, whose word I praise—in God I trust and am not afraid.* (vv.3-4)

2,000 miles away in the mountains of San Diego, a firestorm erupted. The news called it a “war zone.” The phone and electric down. My daughter and family live in the mountain town they evacuated. I picture her grabbing pictures and heirlooms, and hustling kids and pets into the truck. My heart skips a beat. The year was 2007. Twenty-four hours later news trickles in from relatives. My aunt and uncle are safe. My cousin lost her home to the inferno. My daughter would also be evacuated from the town they fled to. There’s nothing for me to do but pray for the safety of my loved ones and the firefighters who risk their lives as they watch their own homes burn while saving homes of others. I remind myself to have faith and trust in God. A calm replaces my panic.

Fires aren't new to Californians. Each year they rage through the dry brush, sometimes taking lives and homes with them. My family was safe, and my grandson would grow up to become a firefighter.

Isaiah 51:17-23; Psalms 57, 58; Galatians 4:1-11; Mark 7:24-37

Tuesday, February 5

Mark 8:1-10 *About four thousand were present. After he sent them away, he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the region of Dalmanutha.* (vv. 9-10)

Jesus *went* away. Other translations of the Bible say He *immediately* got into the boat; *straightaway* he entered a ship; and he went *straight* to the boat. This wasn't the first time Jesus left a crowd. As God in human form, He battled exhaustion the same as us.

Even though I live alone, I sometimes feel the need to get away—to renew my soul. In my neighborhood, hidden in a growth of overgrown trees and wilderness, there's a river. I love the walk to the river. I can sit on the bank and commune with God and nature—the music of the flowing river, the beauty of the Spanish moss hanging from old oak trees, cypress trees with their roots protruding above the water. Dragon flies circle above. I take comfort in the sights and sounds.

“Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed” (Mark 1:35). Before Jesus was arrested, He went to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray (see Mark 14:32).

Isaiah 52:1-12; Psalms 61, 62; Galatians 4:12-20

Wednesday, February 6

Mark 8:11-26 *When he had spit on the man's eyes and put his hands on him, Jesus asked, “Do you see anything?” He looked up and said, “I see people; they look like trees walking around.”* (vv.23b-24)

Have you ever viewed the pictures made by clouds? Or remember searching for objects placed in pictures of trees in children's magazines? From my porch I can see most of my backyard; the gardens with vegetables and flowers, the palms, and the aloe lining the white rock path leading to the lime green Adirondack chairs. I also see the tall oak trees. The porch is where I like to study and write. One early morning as I prayed, I looked up to heaven through the branches and leaves when the face of Jesus appeared. His face as projected in many paintings was perfectly outlined by the oak leaves.

The blind man Jesus healed said he saw people who looked like trees. I imagine his first sight was in black and white—much like my picture

of Jesus in the dawn. The blind man would soon see clearly. Would I? Each morning, Jesus remained in my tree until the leaves began to fall—a reminder Jesus is with me always, even when I can't see Him.

Isaiah 54:1-17; Psalm 72; Galatians 4:21-31

Thursday, February 7

Mark 8:27—9:1 *But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. “Get behind me, Satan!” He said. “You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.”* (v.33)

Jesus was teaching his disciples the Son of Man must suffer many things. He would be rejected, killed, and after three days would rise again. Peter took him aside and rebuked him. Then Jesus rebuked Peter in front of the other disciples: “Get behind me Satan!” With an exclamation mark! Wow! My heart goes out to Peter. How devastated he must have been. How humiliating to be chastised in front of his peers. I’m sure I would run away sobbing and keep running. On the other hand, this was another of Peter’s “open mouth, insert foot” situations. In the previous verses (vv.27-30) when Jesus asked him, “Who do you say I am?” Peter answered, “You are the Christ.” After saying that, why would Peter even think he could rebuke Jesus? Poor Peter. He had a lot to learn, as do we.

I would never want Jesus to look at me and say, “Satan get behind me!” But Peter gives me hope because he learned. He believed. He was restored. And Jesus never stopped loving him.

Isaiah 55:1-13; Psalms 70, 71; Galatians 5:1-15

Friday, February 8

Galatians 5:16-24 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.* (vv.22-23a)

Her name was Maria. I met her on a Gaither Homecoming Cruise to the Caribbean. Each time I rushed to the restroom I found her cleaning sinks and folding terry cloth hand towels for our use. One day, as we waited for a tender to take us ashore, I looked for a restroom. The nearest one had a yellow caution tape across the entrance which read “Cleaning.” Near panic, I knocked and called out, “Hello.” The young woman, smile on her face, let me in. I was washing up when she said in her broken English, “You’re all such a blessing to us.” I told her how we appreciated the clean restrooms. We hugged. Now friends, I learned of her family.

Since that day, whenever I enter a public restroom and someone’s cleaning, I make it a point to thank them for keeping it clean. At Cracker Barrel, Walmart, and the Connecticut airport, this act of kindness made

someone happy and brought surprised looks from bystanders. Acts of kindness put smiles on the faces of others.

Isaiah 56:1-8; Psalm 69; Mark 9:2-13

Saturday, February 9

Mark 9:14-29 *Jesus said to him, “If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.” Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief.”* (vv.23-24 NKJV)

“Maybe you should practice what you write.” These few words have thrown me for a loop. I thought I was sharing a couple things going on in my life, not complaining. As a Christian writer, I’ve always thought myself a faith-filled woman. I might have a relapse for a day or two, but my faith comes right back. Now, the seed of doubt has been planted. Perhaps I don’t have enough faith. Is this what others think? Am I a hypocrite? I pick up my Bible and turn to Mark 9: “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief.” I reach for a Study Bible and read the same words in another version. Below it tells me, “Even those who believe can be nagged by doubt and hopelessness.” In verse 29, Jesus says prayer and fasting is required in some difficult situations. Since I don’t feel hopeless and I don’t believe prayer is my problem, is the answer fasting? I’ve never fasted, at least not for more than a few hours. Lord, I believe; help my unbelief.

Isaiah 57:3-13; Psalms 75, 76; Galatians 5:25—6:10

by Shirley J. Conley

Volume XIX

February 10-16, 2019

Number 6

Sunday, February 10

John 7:37-46 *“Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.”* (v.38 NIV)

You can hear the people’s confusion: “Truly this is the Prophet. This is the Christ. Will the Christ come out of Galilee? Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the seed of David and from the town of Bethlehem, where David was?” The people of Israel were looking for the Messiah—the “anointed one” would set them free.

That same confusion can be heard today: “There must be more to life than this. Why is this happening?” Let the streams of living water, the

Holy Spirit, flow from you. Quench their thirst with the answer: Jesus Christ.

My friend Earl always prays when going from one place to the next, “Who can I share you with next Jesus, bring them into my life?”

The world has questions, confusion, and doubt; Christians have the answer: Jesus! Let’s get some people wet this week!

Isaiah 57:14-21; Psalms 93, 96; Hebrews 12:1-6

Monday, February 11

Psalm 80 *Restore us, O God; cause your face to shine, and we shall be saved.* (v.3)

Verse 3 is the chorus of Psalm 80. The psalm is a petition for deliverance by the children of Israel. “Shepherd of Israel,” who is Jesus Christ, is also the cry of the Christian. Restore us to yourself Lord; smile on us Lord, and save us. Regardless of what we have done, “restore us, O God Almighty; make your face shine upon us, that we may be saved” (v.7).

Total restoration in all things is possible through Jesus alone. When we miss the mark, “restore us, O God Almighty; make your face shine upon us, that we may be saved” (v.14). This chorus, echoed in verses 3, 7, and 14, comes from the Aaronic benediction: “The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace” (Numbers 6:24-26).

Don’t get down on yourself—because Jesus doesn’t; don’t speak ill of yourself—because Jesus doesn’t. Love yourself—because Jesus does.

Isaiah 58:1-12; Galatians 6:11-18; Mark 9:30-41

Tuesday, February 12

2 Timothy 1:1-14 *For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.* (v.7)

You and I are triune persons, just as our God is a triune God. We are body, soul, (mind, will, and emotions) and spirit: “May your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it” (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24). It is the whole person that God is making blameless.

If you become fearful over something, say, “It is written: I have not been given a spirit of timidity.” When you are thinking, “I just can’t do that,” say, “It is written: I have a spirit of power, love, and self-discipline.” When your willpower is challenged, say, “It is written: my spirit is self-disciplined.”

Isaiah 59:1-15a; Psalm 78:1-39; Mark 9:42-50

Wednesday, February 13

Psalm 119:97-120 *Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.* (v.105)

The Bible is a lamp that shines in the dark places and keeps us from stumbling. The lies of the ruler of this Dark Age cannot stand up to the light of Scripture. The world says, “Self-worth equals your performance plus other peoples’ opinions of you,” the word of God says, “You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:26). The world says, “Seeing is believing,” the word of God says, “We live by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7).

In my Bible, I went through Psalm 119 and highlighted the word “word,” then I went back to see what “the word” would do. The word of God will revive you (v.25), strengthen you (v.28), bring you hope (v.43), comfort you (v.50), and shows God’s mercy (v.58). Finish this list and see what the word can do in your life.

The Bible is the word of God. I am what it says I am; I can do what it says I can do; and I can have what it says I can have. It’s God’s word.

Isaiah 59:15b-21; 2 Timothy 1:15—2:13; Mark 10:1-16

Thursday, February 14

2 Timothy 2:14-26 *Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.* (v.15)

My mother always told me, “Davey, fish is brain food.” I never liked fish. However, a steady diet of the word of God is health to the mind. If we are what we eat, then our soul is what it is fed, and it is fed through our minds. Your soul is your mind, your will, and your emotions.

A healthy soul is transformed by the renewing of the mind and then you are able to test and approve what God’s will is for you (Romans 12:2). The word of truth is the gospel of your salvation (Ephesians 1:13), and the word of truth needs to be kept in the mouth (Psalm 119:43), ready to be correctly handled by the worker who labors for Christ.

Isaiah 60:1-17; Psalms 83, 146, 147; Mark 10:17-31

Friday, February 15

2 Timothy 3:1-17 *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.* (v.16)

So what part of “all” don’t you understand? That was the question I asked myself a few years ago. I heard people say, “You can’t take the Bible literally,” or “There are so many contradictions in Scripture,” or “The Bible has been copied over and over and over.”

I decided to agree with this Scripture passage from 2 Timothy and take the Bible as the word of God. I read the Bible as the “inerrant” word of God, that, in the original copies of each manuscript written by each Bible book’s respective author, there was nothing mistaken or tinged with error (Hayford’s Bible Handbook). Now when I find what seems like a contradiction in Scripture, I study to find out where I am wrong.

Isaiah 61:1-9; Psalm 88; Mark 10:32-45

Saturday, February 16

Mark 10:46-52 *“Go,” said Jesus, “your faith has healed you.” Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road. (v.52)*

Bartimaeus, the name means “son of uncleanness,” was blind. Jesus was sent to heal blindness in Israel—both physical and spiritual. The healing of a man born blind was a messianic sign. “Son of David” is a messianic title, and Jesus acknowledged it by not silencing Bartimaeus.

To further stimulate Bartimaeus’ faith, Jesus asks, “What do you want me to do for you?” Bartimaeus releases his faith with the words, “Lord that I might receive my sight.” With the words of Jesus, “Go, your faith has healed you,” Bartimaeus immediately receives his sight and follows Jesus along the road.

If you want to know where to go in life—what to do next—the answer to a tough decision. Jesus asks, “What do you want me to do for you?” Dare to ask Jesus for your miracle, release your faith, speak your word to the Lord. Then go and follow him.

Isaiah 61:10—62:5; Psalms 87, 90; 2 Timothy 4:1-8

by David Laird

Volume XIX

February 17-23, 2019

Number 7

Sunday, February 17

Isaiah 62:6-12 *They will be called “The Holy People” and “The People Redeemed by the LORD”. And Jerusalem will be known as “The Desirable Place” and “The City No Longer Forsaken.” (v.12 NLT)*

As I’m writing this, we are in “March Madness” season. For those who don’t know, this is the month where the best teams in college basketball duke it out for the NCAA title. It’s a crazy, exciting time, but one thing everyone hopes for is an “underdog” team that beats the bigger schools. This so-called “Cinderella Team” is exhilarating to watch because

they have been losing for so long that they are thrilled with their unexpected championship.

Isaiah foretold Christ's birth, but he also didn't sugar-coat the dark days that would proceed it. The Jewish people spent centuries on the losing side: conquered by Babylon, then Alexander, then Rome. But in the end, these "underdogs" would be "The People Redeemed by the Lord" and "No Longer Forsaken." Out of all history, they would give birth to the Greatest Star Player of all Time—Jesus Christ. Now that is what I call a "Cinderella Team"!

Psalms 66, 67; 1 John 2:3-11; John 8:12-19

Monday, February 18

1 Timothy 1:1-17 *This is a trustworthy saying, and everyone should accept it: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"—and I am the worst of them all.* (v.15)

Recently, I was in the library enjoying the lovely silence...until someone's cell phone started ringing. Instantly, I began to look around—as did the people near me. Clearly, everyone thought this was a rude and even illegal thing, since cellphones were banned in this section of the library. But it got worse, because the inconsiderate ingrate *kept letting their phone ring.*

Finally, I'd had enough and decided to move. I reached down to collect my purse—and found out that it was *my* phone that was ringing. The rude, inconsiderate ingrate was *me!*

Though I had no idea I was doing anything wrong, I was the one at fault. Paul was the same way—he didn't even know he needed saving until Christ met him on the road to Damascus. Big or small, knowingly or unknowingly, we are all sinners who have been redeemed by the grace of our loving God. It's good to remember that—even if it takes an illegally ringing cellphone to remind me!

Isaiah 63:1-6; Psalm 89:1-18; Mark 11:1-11

Tuesday, February 19

Mark 11:12-26 *"I tell you, you can pray for anything, and if you believe that you've received it, it will be yours. But when you are praying, first forgive anyone you are holding a grudge against, so that your Father in heaven will forgive your sins, too."* (vv.24-25)

Several recent blogs feature people writing "letters to my younger self." If I were to write a letter to myself at twenty-something, I'd urge her to read further in Mark than Mark 11:24. While it is important to *pray and believe to receive*, it's just as important to *forgive anyone you are holding a grudge against.* They go together.

In my younger days, I elevated unforgiveness to an art form. I nurtured my grudges, thinking that it was weakness to forgive those who didn't deserve it. It took time and grace to realize that clinging to this unforgiveness could actually *block* my prayers. Unforgiveness ended up hurting me far more than it hurt them.

If I could tell my younger self anything, it would be to take verse 25 to heart. Let go of grudges, however well-founded. Forgive lavishly and often. Allowing God to forgive their sins allows Him to forgive mine. Because, truthfully, I really don't deserve forgiveness either.

Isaiah 63:7-14; Psalms 97, 99, 100; 1 Timothy 1:18—2:8

Wednesday, February 20

Mark 11:27—12:12 [*Jesus and the disciples*] arrived again in Jerusalem, and while Jesus was walking in the temple courts, the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders came to him. “By what authority are you doing these things” they asked. “And who gave you the authority to do this?” (vv.27-28 NIV)

Back in high school, one of my teachers was an old hippie. And I do mean *old*. The fellow creaked when he walked. But underneath the leather headband, faded bell-bottoms, and the sandals, the man had a lot of wisdom. I remember one time when he looked at our class and delivered the following warning: “You are going to meet a lot of idiots in your life. Don't hand over your power to them.”

This passage from Mark's gospel reminds me of that warning. The religious leaders tried to trap Jesus by asking a “gotcha” question. They didn't care a fig about Jesus or his followers, they just wanted Christ to hand over his authority—his power—to them. It backfired, spectacularly, and they ended up looking like the idiots that they were.

We can't always avoid life's idiots. But we can avoid getting caught up in their games. Jesus knew who his authority came from; so did my old hippie teacher. Who knew the Holy Spirit's wisdom might come by way of faded bell-bottoms?

Isaiah 63:15—64:9; Psalms 101, 109; 1 Timothy 3:1-16

Thursday, February 21

Mark 12:13-27 When the [*Pharisees*] handed [*the coin*] to [*Jesus*], he asked, “Whose picture and title are stamped on it?” “Caesar's”, they replied. “Well then,” Jesus said, “give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and give to God what belongs to God.” (vv.16-17a NLT)

Even non-Christians have heard about this famous scene: how the Pharisees tried to trap Jesus by asking if he should pay taxes to Caesar. Jesus

tells them to look at Caesar’s picture stamped on the coin. “Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar,” he replies. “And give to God what belongs to God.”

But imagine a “follow-up” question to the Pharisees: “And what,” Christ might ask, “belongs to God?” The Pharisees might dither around a bit before admitting they don’t know and, at that point, Jesus would beat them at their own game. “Whose image,” he would ask them, “is stamped on you?”

All human beings are made in the image of God. Just as the coin was stamped with the image of Caesar, we are stamped with the image of God. Black or white, man or woman, Christian or non-Christian—we are all image-bearers of our Creator.

Isaiah 65:1-12; Psalm 105:1-22; 1 Timothy 4:1-16

Friday, February 22

Psalm 102 *My enemies taunt me day after day. They mock and curse me.* (v.8)

Anyone who thinks the Bible is a “nice book” has never read Psalm 102. Think of your worst day, then square it, then multiply it by 100. That is the kind of horrible day the writer of this psalm is having.

Perhaps the most damning phrase is verse 8, where enemies “mock and curse” him. But the original language is even worse. It literally translates: “Those who ridicule me use my name as a curse.” In other words, the psalmist’s lot in life is so miserable that his name is being used as a *swear word!*

But even in the midst of this disaster, the psalmist calls on God, knowing that the Lord has not forsaken His child. No matter how bad your day is (or how good, for that matter), our Father is always nearby, ready to rescue us from horrible days.

Isaiah 65:17-25; 1 Timothy 5:17-25; Mark 12:28-34

Saturday, February 23

Mark 12:35-44 *Jesus replied, “The most important commandment is this: ‘Listen, O Israel! The Lord our God is the one and only Lord. And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.’”* (vv.29-30)

I’m using a quote from yesterday’s verses in Mark. When Jesus spoke of the greatest commandment, he talked of loving the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. It is a prodigious list, but what stands out to me is how God led the list. All our *heart*. Not mind. Not strength. Not even soul. Our *heart*.

In the ancient world, the heart wasn't viewed as just another organ. It was the center of hidden emotional-intellectual-moral activity. It was the central organ that moved the rest of the body, and not just the physical body. The heart was the seat of a person's humanity. For early believers, this is where their love for God was to begin.

The Lord first spoke this greatest command through Moses (Deuteronomy 6:5). His Jewish audience would have recognized it. Today, when so much of our humanity seems driven by causes, hashtags, and internet memes, I think it is important to again recognize this greatest commandment.

Isaiah 66:1-6; Psalms 107:33-43, 108; 1 Timothy 6:6-21

by Ruth Owen

Volume XIX

February 24-March 2, 2019

Number 8

Sunday, February 24

Psalm 118 *The LORD's right hand is lifted high; the LORD's right hand has done mighty things! I will not die but live, and will proclaim what the LORD has done.* (vv.16-17 NIV)

The short-term memory I have when I get into situations is quite frustrating—in that I often forget the mightiness of the Lord and His promises to me. Everything you and I encounter is capable of being touched by the Lord's mighty right hand. Power, protection, and His presence is offered at all times. In Matthew 22, Christ reminds us to “sit at my right hand until I humiliate your enemies beneath your feet.” We all have enemies of some sort; sometimes it is our old ways, our old nature, a person or persons, sickness, finances, etc. The Lord has in the past, and will in the future, do great and mighty things.

I have been lifted out of so many situations, many I brought on myself. In hindsight, the only way I can see how I made it out of many of them was the mightiness of the Lord.

Lord, help me to proclaim the great acts You have done.

Isaiah 66:7-14; 1 John 3:4-10; John 10:7-16

Monday, February 25

Ruth 1:1-14 *“It is more bitter for me than for you, because the LORD's hand has turned against me!”* (v.13)

These are the words of Naomi and this is a snapshot of full-on knee-buckling grief and sorrow. She has lost her husband and both sons. We don't

know how they passed away, but we know that she is a shell of a woman, probably in shock and certainly in need of care and guidance—physically, spiritually, and mentally. Who wouldn't be? Her daughter-in-law, Ruth, became her eyes and ears, her protector, as they traveled back to her hometown. Naomi is wide-open with her pain and allows herself to be carried by the grace of family and friends.

I have heard many people say they don't recall much about the period of time after the death of a loved one, or a tragic situation, but had to rely solely on the care God provides through the Trinity and loved ones.

Thank You, Lord, for your innate understanding of our needs despite our lack of faith and understanding.

Psalm 106:1-18; 2 Corinthians 1:1-11; Matthew 5:1-12

Tuesday, February 26

Matthew 5:13-20 *"In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father."* (v.16 NLT)

My Dad loved snappy little catch words, acronyms, and anything that created positive encouragement. He would search out various books and magazine articles and listen to speeches, pursuing the next great collection of encouraging words. One day he came across the writing of "Be a Good-finder" and he added his own concepts as he traveled through life. A "Good-finder" goes out of his or her way to find good in others and encourage them to step out in faith. One quip of "Good-finders" is to "scatter sunshine."

We would often see my Dad scattering sunshine. For instance, at a local restaurant he visited frequently, he became acquainted with a waitress who needed dental work and a busboy who had the desire and talent to sell. My Dad paid the dentist to fix the waitress' teeth and sent the busboy to real estate school. I'm not saying it needs to be monetary—simply follow Gods heart and listen to His ways.

Scattering sunshine is like shining the light of Christ into others' lives. We need to look for opportunities for good deeds, all in the name of Jesus, so that others may meet him.

Ruth 1:15-22; Psalms 120, 121, 122, 123; 2 Corinthians 1:12-22

Wednesday, February 27

2 Corinthians 1:23—2:17 *To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?* (v.16 KJV)

When Christ died on the cross and the curtain was split, forever more the choice was set for life or death. Most of the time in my walk with Jesus, I am surrounded by his love and peace and mercy. But there are also

times when I have been rocked with awe and trepidation as I try to grasp with my limited understanding of what he did for us at Calvary.

This past Palm Sunday was one of those times. I was in Tennessee with my Mom at her church, attending the early morning service in a beautiful, sunlit chapel. The music started for the hymn *Were You There*: “Were you there when they crucified my Lord? Sometimes it causes me to tremble. Were you there when they nailed him to the cross? Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?”

I trembled inside my heart that morning and cried quietly as the words and the music washed over me with Jesus’ presence. We should tremble more often in awe of what has been done for us.

Ruth 2:1-13; Psalm 119:145-176; Matthew 5:21-26

Thursday, February 28

Psalm 131 *LORD, my heart is not proud; my eyes are not haughty. I don’t concern myself with matters too great or too awesome for me to grasp. Instead, I have calmed and quieted myself, like a weaned child who no longer cries for its mother’s milk. Yes, like a weaned child is my soul within me.* (vv.1-2 NLT)

This is a freeing verse. I was in a men’s Bible study recently, and a rugged 240-pound linebacker of a man, built like a piece of steel, said, “You know, when the world gets tough on me and I feel the weight of the world is on top of me as I toss and turn at night, I consider the verse about the weaned child, calm and quieted. Then I picture myself at rest in the palm of God’s hand and I slowly drift into a peaceful sleep.” That was a massively freeing statement. Let’s face it, the world is *not* in our hands. The power of the Lord, His sovereignty, and His desire for good to come out of even the most difficult of circumstances is the reality and our hope—not our efforts.

Ruth 2:14-23; Psalms 132, 133; Corinthians 3:1-18; Matthew 5:27-37

Friday, March 1

Matthew 5:38-48 *But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you.* (v.44 KJV)

To say that this is easier said than done, is an understatement. This is how the war is won. Jesus realizes that we are going to be challenged to the fullest as we try to walk this out. But as I struggle, I am reminded that he hasn’t asked us to do anything that he wasn’t asked to do or endure himself; therefore, he understands our lack of patience, our discomfort and weaknesses. Think of the many times he loved on his enemies, blessed them, and then took the extra step to pray for them—the Romans, the

gossipers, the liars, the thieves, the religious naysayers, Saul, Judas, etc. And those are just a few of the ones we know about!

Ruth 3:1-1; Psalms 140, 142; 2 Corinthians 4:1-12

Saturday, March 2

Ruth 4:1-17 *The neighbor women said, “Now at last Naomi has a son again!” And they named him Obed. He became the father of Jesse and the grandfather of David.* (v.17 NLT)

Only God could have brought this type of unexpected joy and healing to Ruth and Naomi. More joy than anyone could have asked for. The women friends are beside themselves, excited to see their dear friend hold this baby boy! Christ restored their souls, gave them rest in their grief, along with the joy of a newborn child. From the union of Boaz and Ruth was to come the line of descendants that gave birth to King David, the line of Jesus. God is always working ahead of us. His prophesies and promises are fulfilled—each and every one of them in His time. Honestly, I could not have ever imagined the story diverting to this place of perfection. Only Christ can heal like this.

Psalm 137; 2 Corinthians 4:13—5:10; Matthew 6:1-16

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