

Good News Daily

March 3-April 6, 2019

Volume XIX

March 3-9, 2019

Number 9

Sunday, March 3

Deuteronomy 6:1-9 *Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts.* (vv.5-6 NIV)

Moses is reminding us to make life choices with all that is in us—from our hearts of love for God. He specifically says heart, not mind, thought, or emotion. I am reminded of David whom God called “a man after my own heart” (Acts 13:22). What can we do to have God think of us in that way?

Clearly, heart choices require transactions of intimate giving to God and receiving from God. They originate and are nurtured in each of our unique and special relationships with God. For me, these conversations require a heart desire to share the good and the bad stuff, to find out how God sees them, to hear what He thinks and wants for me, and to try to follow His directions. I have discovered that my issues often are rooted in my mind, thoughts, or emotions. Discovering God’s love as He shares His perspective and changes my vision allows me to deeply receive what I need. *That* is a heart transaction.

Psalms 148, 149, 150; Hebrews 12:18-29; John 12:24-32

Monday, March 4

Psalms 25 *The LORD confides in those who fear him; he makes his covenant known to them.* (v.14)

Here, David tells us that if we make life choices from our hearts of love for God, God will share His covenant with us. A covenant is a promise or agreement between two parties. Before Jesus, people could only approach God through a priest and an animal sacrifice. God has a new covenant and promise for us. He sent Jesus filled with “The Spirit of God” (Luke 4:18).

At the Last Supper, Jesus revealed God's plan: "This is the blood of my covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 28:28).

As we prepare for a Holy Lent and try to make choices from our hearts of love for God, who we know because of Jesus, let's open our hearts to receive more of the presence of a loving God through the power of the Holy Spirit that resides in each of us. That is my prayer for myself and for each of you.

Deuteronomy 6:10-15; Hebrews 1:1-14; John 1:1-18

Tuesday, March 5

Psalm 26 *My feet stand on level ground; in the great congregation I will praise the LORD.* (v.12 NIV). *I'm on the level with you, GOD; I bless you every chance I get.* (v.12 The Message)

How did David grow to publicly praise God and privately complain to God? He learned that being level and honest with God brought God's truth and peace. His thanksgiving became public praise and blessing of God.

"We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Romans 28:28). Yet, why do we so often thank God privately instead of shouting His praises and singing songs to Him? For me, hearing how God has encountered us in these difficult places brings me encouragement and hope. My prayer is that God blesses each of us with a renewed presence and understanding of God's love and suffering for us.

Deuteronomy 6:16-25; Psalm 28; Hebrews 2:1-10; John 1:19-28

Wednesday, March 6

Luke 18:9-14 *"But the tax collector stood up at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, "God, have mercy on me, a sinner."* (v.13 NIV)

We come to Ash Wednesday knowing we will remember our need before God with the mark of the cross in black ash on our foreheads. The tax collector knew he was finite and sinful by nature; he knew he needed God but didn't feel worthy to look up to heaven. I think of his suffering and his unworthiness and then... I celebrate his

cry for mercy. God knows we are all tax collectors. We all need God's mercy.

For me, it is always a desire for power or control, more possessions, or my pride that take me to a self-imposed separation from God. God is always with me if I welcome His presence. God is with me when I need mercy.

As I begin this season, I want to remember the source of the living water for life and my need for mercy. I want the suffering of Jesus for me to become a deeper reality and a greater thanksgiving. As a wife, mother, sister, friend, and grandmother, may I be flooded with this new reality and may I glorify God by showing mercy in new ways.

Jonah 3:1—4:11; Psalms 95, 32, 143; Hebrews 12:1-14

Thursday, March 7

John 1:29-34 *The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"* (v.29)

Under the old covenant, a lamb was sacrificed every morning and evening in the temple for the sins of the people. To pay for sin, a life had to be given. Can you imagine a lamb being sacrificed twice daily in our own sanctuary? Instead, God chose to send the Lamb of God, Jesus, as a perfect once-for-all-sins sacrifice. John the Baptist introduces Jesus as the Son of God, and reports God made this revelation during his baptism. Then Jesus' ministry of signs, miracles, wonders, and his journey to the cross began.

How awesome God is to show us who He is by giving us these accounts of Jesus' ministry and the relationship Father and Son had. The end goal for God the Father and God the Son was aligned. The end goal was to ensure a transforming relationship with each of us. Our Jesus loved us because he knew love from his Father. That love made every step to the cross for us. As we give up or take on something for Jesus today, let's ponder that.

Deuteronomy 7: 6-11; Psalm 37:1-18; Titus 1:1-16

Friday, March 8

Psalm 31 *But, I trust in you, LORD: I say, "You are my God." My times are in your hands; deliver me from my enemies and from those who pursue me.* (vv.14-15 NIV)

Knowing that all of my life circumstances are under the control of God, who is delighted to be part of them with me, I recall a season of confusion. Doors were closing in an area important to me. It grew into frustration, self-blame, false guilt, over striving, and judgment. It was not a pleasant time. Meanwhile, there were so many awesome ways God was blessing me in this same place. What was the truth?

I asked God for help and shared my thoughts and emotions. His truth about this issue and my role in it released me from all negativity; his affirmation brought great peace. He told me the situation was not about me; His blessings for me were valid; it was His business to judge and to shine light. It was my job to stay close to Him; to learn and grow from Him. My trust in God grew longer legs that day.

Deuteronomy 7:12-16; Titus 2:1-15; John 1:35-42

Saturday, March 9

John 1:43-51 *"Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see," said Philip. When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false." "How do you know me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you."* (vv.46-48 NIV)

Nathanael declared Jesus was the Son of God and became a disciple after they met. Yet, he didn't expect much of anything good from Nazareth. If he hadn't agreed to come with Philip, what might have happened instead? Just think of opportunities gained because of persistence or lost because of ignorance, prejudice, or...

It reminds me a five-hour trip to visit my elderly stepmother, whom I love dearly. I was tired and busy, but returned with blessings of laughter, tears, and the memory of her drawing my face close so she could see me. Then, there is the conference I attend out of duty and with low expectations. Not familiar with either the speaker or the

audience, I struggled spending my Saturday there. I returned blessed with new friends and new ideas.

God is so cool. He knows just what we need now. Talking with Jesus and living in that thin air is life giving. Jesus continues his journey to the cross for each of us today.

Deuteronomy 7:17-26; Psalms 30, 32; Titus 3:1-15

by Jane Shinn

Volume XIX

March 10-16, 2019

Number 10

Sunday, March 10

1 Corinthians 1:17-31 *Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?* (v.20 NIV)

By the time I reached my mid-20's, I had earned bachelor's and master's degrees and was working on a Ph.D.—all, in Philosophy. A few years later, the Lord led me to a powerful encounter with the living Christ in which I was spiritually born anew. A breakfast cereal company was offering a free duffel with anything you wanted embroidered on the side. The bag I ordered proclaimed “Jesus is the Answer!” My smart-aleck intellectual colleagues wanted to know, “What’s the question?”

Philosophy taught me how to think critically and analytically, and to be able to make and evaluate an argument. But it never provided me the answers I needed for living life the right way. Jesus Christ showed me how foolish is the wisdom of this world. God is so much smarter, and His ideas are always better!

Deuteronomy 8:1-10; Psalms 63, 98; Mark 2:18-22

Monday, March 11

Deuteronomy 8:11-20 *Be careful that you do not forget the LORD your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day.* (v.11)

So much of the Old Testament consists of Israel remembering what God had done for them, especially their liberation from Egypt as

detailed in Exodus. Earlier, in Deuteronomy 8:2, Moses tells the people: “Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart.” God knows that when we remember His goodness, mercy, and provision, that tends to lead to praise and thanksgiving.

Last year, during Lent, one of our parishioners came up with a “40 Days of Thankfulness” plan. She encouraged everyone in the congregation to try to thank God for at least one thing daily. I discovered that in finding things for which to give thanks, I was remembering more of God’s care for me than I might have otherwise. Take time today to recall and give thanks for whatever God has done for you. The more you remember, the more thankful you’ll be, and it will brighten your day!

Psalms 41, 52; Hebrews 2:11-18; John 2:1-12

Tuesday, March 12

John 2:13-22 So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves he said, “*Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father’s house into a market!*” (vv.15-16)

Wow! In this passage, Jesus is very angry, even violent and destructive. Yet most Christians are raised with the notion that we shouldn’t lose our tempers. As a result, we tend to “stuff” things more than unbelievers, and that leads to other problems—emotional, physical, and relational. But is it OK to get angry? In Ephesians 4:26, we read: “In your anger, do not sin.”

This helps us understand that Jesus models for us righteous anger—being upset about things that go against God’s will and plan. In my youth, I had a terrible temper; but after knowing Christ for the past 32 years, I don’t get mad about much of anything except injustice. Like every human being, I still struggle with petty resentments and annoyances, but Jesus has shown me that the only good anger is righteous (not self-righteous) anger. Something for all of us to think and pray about.

Deuteronomy 9:14-12; Psalm 45; Hebrews 3:1-11

Wednesday, March 13

Hebrews 3:12-19 *But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called “Today,” so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness.”* (v.13)

As I was growing up, I didn’t receive a lot of encouragement from my primary parent. This made me want to be an encourager for others—a “Barnabas” (whose name means “son of encouragement”). As a result, I try to remember to thank people who usually don’t receive appreciation, such as supermarket checkers, restroom cleaners, garbage collectors, toll-takers, or the maintenance staff in our apartment building. Often, these folks seem surprised that anyone would even talk to them, let alone thank them.

Because life tends to beat us down, we could all do more to encourage our fellow church members and neighbors. Phone a shut in; send a birthday card; visit someone in the hospital; offer a sincere compliment; hug a parishioner lovingly during passing of the peace. Dare I suggest, tell a friend, family member, or even a despondent stranger, “I love you”? Jesus would be pleased, and so might the recipient of your encouragement.

Deuteronomy 9:13-21; Psalm 119:49-72; John 2:23—3:15

Thursday, March 14

John 3:16-21 *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.* (v.16)

This Scripture was probably the first verse I had to memorize in Sunday School. As the shortest condensation of the Gospel, John 3:16 appears on everything from vanity plates and bumper stickers, to T-shirts and buttons. A friend of mine, a priest named John, was so excited about his street address he made his Facebook profile a picture of him standing next to his mailbox stenciled with “316.”

But verse 18, which follows this joyful news, is one many would rather not hear and prefer to omit: “Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.” It’s not popular to say that whoever refuses to believe in

and know Jesus Christ will not be saved from death and hell. However, the Gospel truth is both good news and bad news, and if we believe in the authority of Holy Scripture, we need to accept both. It's not as hard as it sounds. Only believe! The benefits are "out of this world"!

Deuteronomy 9:23—10:5; Psalm 50; Hebrews 4:1-10

Friday, March 15

Psalm 54 "Surely God is my help; the Lord is the one who sustains me." (v.4)

When I read this verse, I heard in my head the praise anthem by Jack Noble White, based on the First Song of Isaiah: "Surely it is God who saves me, I will trust in Him and not be afraid, for the Lord is my stronghold and my sure defense, and He will be my Savior."

Jesus said in John 15:5, "Without me you can do nothing." The counterpart to that is Matthew 19:26, "With God all things are possible." And one of my all-time favorite verses is Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

The longer I live, I'm aware that I can barely even get out of bed in the morning—let alone do anything else—without God's help. When parishioners compliment my sermons, my answer is always quite sincerely, "God gets the credit." Even holding 4 and 3/4 academic degrees (I never finished the Ph.D.), I wouldn't be able to put one thought in front of another, or stand up and preach the phone book, without God's help. Thank you, Jesus!

Deuteronomy 10:12-22; Psalm 40; Hebrews 4:11-16; John 3:22-36

Saturday, March 16

Hebrews 5:1-10 *"In the same way, Christ did not take on himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But ... was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek."* (vv.5, 10)

I always love to see depictions of Jesus as a priest, whether on the cross as "Christus Rex/Christus Victor," the risen Christ as king and priest, or in the icon that hangs in our sacristy, showing Jesus vested as a priest, serving Communion. The Bible tells us that Jesus is our Good Shepherd, but He is also our priest. Like a good pastor,

Jesus explains for us the Scriptures and teaches us, intercedes and prays for us, and visits us with comfort when we are sick or suffering.

As our priest, Christ offers a sacrifice for our sins—but amazingly, Jesus offers himself as the sacrifice. (I’m glad I don’t have to do that for my flock.) Thank you, Jesus, for being our king, priest, and sacrifice! The Celebration Hymnal, Hymn 123 (“How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds”) has the words: “Jesus, my Shepherd, Brother, Friend, My Prophet, Priest and King, My Lord, my Life, my Way, my End, Accept the praise I bring.” Amen!

Deuteronomy 11:18-28; Psalm 55; John 4:1-26

by The Rev. Dr. Nina George-Hacker

Volume XIX

March 17-23, 2019

Number 11

Sunday, March 17

Jeremiah 1:1-10 Before I formed thee in the womb, I knew thee: and before thou earnest forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. (v.5 KJV)

My church has just begun our search process for a new rector. We have a vestry who will make the final decision and a search committee that will conduct a parish survey first, to see what our members think they would like to have in a new leader. Then the top candidates will be interviewed and, finally, we will select who we pray will be God’s choice. The process usually takes an average of 8 months.

Our intercessory prayers have already been answered in the selection of many outstanding church leaders for this important decision. We are all confident in the Holy Spirits’ guidance. During this time, I also hope to discern my own future mission from God regarding my ministry area on the vestry this next 3 years. In Numbers 11:29 Moses said, “would God that all the LORD’s people were prophets, and that the LORD would put His spirit upon them!”

Psalms 24, 29; 1 Corinthians 3:11-23; Mark 3:31—4:1-9

Monday, March 18

John 4:27-42 *Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.* (v.35)

In our first rector selection committee/vestry meeting, we were told about an interesting observation by our Bishop's assistant during his seminary experience. He said the three areas most seminaries don't spend much time preparing students for are leadership, stewardship, and evangelism.

As we begin our search process for a new rector, one of the disturbing things happening in our church is that we are experiencing decreasing attendance at our Sunday services. This is especially alarming due to the present need for faith in our country. In Florida, for instance, we recently had both a church and a school shooting tragedy involving many faithful believers and innocent children. I once read a book titled *Liberation of the Laity*. The author points out that in God's plan for His Church, the ordained ministers are to teach and preach God's word, but it is the work of the laity to bring the unchurched to church. It seems to me we will need a rector to help us with the great commission of harvesting souls.

Jeremiah 1:11-19; Psalms 56, 57, 58; Romans 1:1-15

Tuesday, March 19

John 4:43-54 *Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe.* (v.48)

This account was of the second miracle of healing that Jesus did, when he was traveling into Galilee out of Judaea. His first miracle was turning water into wine at the wedding in Cana.

For many years, our church has had a very successful healing service and ministry. However, recently there have been several disagreements between the ministry and our church. We must sort this out before the selection of a new rector. My wife is on a committee to seek God's wisdom in this area. She has had a six-year battle with bladder cancer. We are thankful for our church's answered prayers in her behalf for this disease. Initially, the prognosis was very guarded. In fact, I remember at one time, bladder removal was a possibility. But, thank God, through prayers and Jesus' healing using chemo and

immune therapy, she has been cancer free the past three years. However, my wife recently needed prayers again regarding an exploratory surgery for a troublesome spot discovered by MRI. We both attended the healing service this week before the procedure and, I am happy to report, she was given a completely clean bill of health by her urologist. Praise God.

In today's reading of Jesus healing the boy, the healing came as a result of the father's faith and prayer for his son. All of us need the support of family and other's prayers and Jesus' healings. Wouldn't you agree?

Jeremiah 2:1-13; Psalms 61, 62; Romans 1:16-25

Wednesday, March 20

Psalm 72 His name shall endure forever: His name shall be continued as long as the sun: And men shall be blessed in him: All nations shall call him blessed. (v.17)

A funny thing happened yesterday at the "Y" (as it is now called, it used to be the YMCA). I went to my monthly Mission Committee meeting (that use to be called the Christian Awareness Committee). This committee's purpose, I've been told, is "Trying to put the C back in YMCA."

I've been active in the YMCA ever since I was a boy working summers as a camp counselor. In the early days when you walked in the door at my local Y, you were greeted by a chapel which had a sign across the portals saying, "Jesus, he's reason we're here!" I always thought that was very inspirational. However, several years ago, during a building remodeling project, the chapel disappeared and the old welcome sign was removed to a hallway hidden from view. Most members probably hadn't noticed this change—but I had.

Our Mission Committee recently voted to have a prayer board constructed for the hallway cove area. We wanted to have the old logo as the header for the board. However, the management of the Y decided that would not be "inclusive" enough and a controversy began. Yesterday, however, with God's grace and mediation, we decided to move forward accepting their logo, "Refresh your Spirit."

We're just thankful the old sign, a cross, and a chaplain ministry will be added to the area.

Jeremiah 3:6-18; Romans 1:28—2:11; John 5:1-18

Thursday, March 21

Psalm 71 *My mouth shall shew forth thy righteousness and thy salvation all the day; for I know not the numbers thereof.* (v.15)

Today's psalm is a prayer for old age. I find myself thankful for my 78 years of life. Especially, when I consider the relative short lives of my animal patients the past 63 years working as a veterinarian.

This week a past client and animal-loving deacon sent me a meditation from a Franciscan, Richard Rohr, who references a book I once read by Franciscan Jack Wintz, *Will I See My Dog in Heaven?* His conclusion, like mine, is "Yes, of course they will!" If you doubt, he suggests you read Isaiah 11:1-9 and 65:17-26 about God's future Peaceful Kingdom, and Revelation 5:13.

Father Wintz quotes from Job 12:7-10: "If you would learn more, ask the cattle, seek information from the birds of the air. The creeping things of earth will give you lessons, and the fishes of the sea will tell you all. There is not a single creature that does not know that everything is of God's making. God holds in power the soul of every living thing, and the breath of every human body."

As we grow older, he reminds us, "we are a part of this creation, not apart from it." To love something is to mirror its inmost core and dignity, which we have also found within ourselves. That is what I've observed in my relationships with my clients and their pets these many years. The pets mirror the unconditional love of God, which I believe is our goal in our relationship with Him.

Jeremiah 4:9-10, 19-28; Psalm 70; Romans 2:12-24; John 5:19-29

Friday, March 22

John 5:30-47 *Search the scriptures for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.* (v.39)

I went to a movie with my wife and three other Christians this weekend. The movie was *I Can Only Imagine*, which is a true story of Christian forgiveness and reconciliation between a father and his son. The movie title is based on a very popular song about their

relationship and the son’s musical gift. The story brought to mind my own life story with a very similar relationship with my father. Today, as I write this, is Palm Sunday, and we were reminded by our preacher that we can’t celebrate Easter without reliving Jesus’ suffering on the cross for our sins. To contemplate God our Father giving His Son for us, I can only imagine.

From my readings, I have been told the father-son relationship is very important. There are many Old Testament stories of this relationship, especially of oldest sons like me and the importance of the father’s blessing. I am happy to remember that before my earthly father died, I reconciled our relationship and received his forgiveness, as I have with my heavenly Father.

Jeremiah 5:1-9; Psalm 69; Romans 2:25—3:18

Saturday, March 23

Jeremiah 5:20-31 Fear ye not me? saith the LORD: Will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it? (v.22)

Yesterday my grandson and I went to our beach house to inspect the new sea wall being built along the coast at Flagler Beach. In our area, 19 property owners had major property damage of either dune erosion or home damage from the three hurricanes of the past several years. The 15” tall sea wall is almost completed, ahead of the upcoming turtle nesting season in May and another hurricane season starting in June. We bought our 60 front feet of oceanfront Atlantic property in 1976. Back then, beach property was affordable, and we built a small home soon after. We’ve been blessed to have had many family memories there over this past 42 years. My mother in law, upon seeing the ocean view in the early days, proclaimed, “Isn’t God powerful!”

In Oswald Chambers’ *My Utmost for His Highest*, he describes the “call of the sea.” For me that’s what I’ve have experienced there—God’s special presence in what the Chamber of Commerce describes as “The Peaceful Beach.”

Spirituality is defined as a sense of interconnectedness with all living creatures and creation and an awareness of the purpose and meaning of life. I think we need these quiet places to praise, pray, and meditate with the Almighty.

Psalms 75, 76; Romans 3:19-31; John 7:1-13

by R. Bruce Keene

Volume XIX

March 24-30, 2019

Number 12

Sunday, March 24

Psalm 93 *The floods have roared like thunder; the floods have lifted their pounding waves. But mightier than the violent raging of the seas, mightier than the breakers on the shore—the LORD above is mightier than these!* (vv.3b-4 NLT)

I love what the psalmist is declaring within this passage. First, he's allowing himself to be honest—he's calling out the reality of the storm. In seasons past, I've often found myself trying to ignore the vastness of my storm. I shove it aside. I suppress whatever I'm feeling and try to push through.

However, I'm learning that it's okay to be honest. It's okay to acknowledge the weightiness of my problems. It's okay to acknowledge how "big" the issue looks and feels. *But* in all things, after I've acknowledged the reality of the situation, the psalmist teaches us to follow through with declarations of the greatness of our God!

Yes, indeed. Our God is mightier than any storm we might face. Amen.

Jeremiah 6:9-15; Psalm 96; 1 Corinthians 6:12-20; Mark 5:1-20

Monday, March 25

John 7:14-36 *Could our leaders possibly believe that he is the Messiah? But how could he be? For we know where this man comes from.* (vv.26b-27a)

Do you ever wonder how often we miss the work of God simply because of our natural explanation? Many people in Jesus' day

did not recognize him as the Son of God, simply because they knew who his mother and father were.

I have to ask myself...how often do I do this? How often do I miss the supernatural presence of God in my life because I can talk myself into a logical explanation? The truth is, God is everywhere. He is in and through all things. But I believe He is looking for people believing beyond their natural explanations and seeking His presence in the unseen. In the same way it required faith for people to believe Jesus truly was the Son of God, it also requires faith in our daily lives to find the Lord even in the mundane.

I pray we open our eyes today to see Him. He is right there waiting.

Jeremiah 7:1-15; Psalm 80; Romans 4:1-12

Tuesday, March 26

John 7:37-52 On the last day, the climax of the festival, Jesus stood and shouted to the crowds, "Anyone who is thirsty may come to me! Anyone who believes in me may come and drink!" (vv.37-38a)

Have you ever wondered why Jesus often would speak straight to the appetites of humanity? One day I found myself pondering this question with the Lord as He revealed something to me. I felt the Holy Spirit ask me, "Janae, what often drives your behavior? What do you find yourself looking forward to in the day?" And If I'm being brutally honest, it didn't exactly take long for me to answer that question.

I look forward to satisfying my appetite—whether food or drink or anything that carries the lure of pleasure. And, quite frankly, I think if we're being honest with ourselves most of us would admit this to be true.

Thankfully, Jesus knew this. He spoke to our greatest longings to be satisfied. And though often we think it's found in something tangible, we can only find the fullness of satisfaction in him.

He truly is the well that never run's dry. He is our daily bread.

Jeremiah 7:21-34; Psalm 78:1-39; Romans 4:13-25

Wednesday, March 27

Romans 5:1-11 *We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. And this hope will not lead to disappointment.* (vv.3-5a)

Endurance. Strength. Character. Confidence. Hope. Who in their right mind doesn't want these qualities? Well, the unfortunate reality is no one easily coasts their way into strengthening. It always comes with a burn. It always comes through the tearing of muscles, the sweating, and the pain.

So often we want the outcome without the pain in between. I mean, who wouldn't? We are an instant-gratifying and microwave kind of society that wants whatever's easiest. And, unfortunately, we cheat ourselves out of all that God has for us.

I'm learning that trials bring us into total dependency upon God. I'm learning that in my pain, I encounter His faithfulness—which leads me to fall in love with Him all over again. And when I love God more than anything else, I become strong. I become confident—full of character—and full of hope.

So, if this is what trials bring, bring them on.

Jeremiah 8:18—9:6; Psalm 119:97-120; John 8:12-20

Thursday, March 28

Psalm 42 *Why am I discouraged? Why is my heart so sad? I will put my hope in God! I will praise him again—my Savior and my God!* (vv.5-6a)

In seasons of trial and hardship, this is a passage I'll often find myself reading over and over. I have to admit, commanding your soul to put your hope in God is a whole lot easier said than done. I know for me, when I'm overcome by emotion, it takes every ounce of my being to begin to choose truth over feeling. And honestly, some days I fail to. But the more I learn about healthy living, and the more I encounter the reality of God, the easier it has become.

And though I might be completely disheartened, and everything about my circumstance yells "defeat!"—my history with

God screams “HE IS FAITHFUL!” No matter what my fickle feelings might say, His faithfulness is the truth and hope I will stand upon.

Jeremiah 10:11-24; Psalms 83, 43; Romans 5:12-21; John 8:21-32

Friday, March 29

Romans 6:1-11 *For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin. And since we died with Christ, we know we will also live with him.* (vv.7-8)

Life—and life abundantly. It’s what Jesus came to bring. But in an inside, upside-down kingdom, life in Jesus looks a whole lot different than what most of us would imagine.

I know for me, far too often I am seeing “life” through the lens of what I can see with my physical eyes. It looks like wealth, and adventure, and community, and external beauty, etc. —all the things the world sees as valuable. The only problem is, this couldn’t be even further from the truth of abundant life in Christ. Jesus lived completely contrary to anything this world finds as valuable. But from what I’m beginning to experience, it is far more satisfying than *anything* this world could ever bring. He brings peace, joy, and selfless love that goes beyond oneself. That is something the world cannot give.

Jeremiah 11:1-8, 14-20; Psalm 88; John 8:33-47

Saturday, March 30

Psalm 90 *Lord, through all the generations you have been our home!* (v.1)

A couple of years ago, the Lord began to take me into a season of “the unknown.” I don’t know about you, but I absolutely *hate* not knowing. Not only do I feel out of control, but I often find myself in an internal panic when my mind is flooded with questions that seemingly have no answers.

I’ll never forget though—the day the Holy Spirit whispered in my ear “Janae, are you willing to let Me be your home?” It was like all of the sudden, the people, places, and things that He was so gently leading me away from no longer had a hold on me. For years these people had been my sense of belonging and my safe-place—for years

that had been my home. But the Lord was longing to show me a new way.

Making Him my sense of home and belonging has been the sweetest decision of my life. He truly is the only thing that cannot be taken away from us. He is constant. He is steady. He is Home.

Jeremiah 13:1-11; Psalms 87, 90; Romans 6:12-23; John 8:47-59

by Janae Schirle

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Sunday, March 31

Mark 8:11-21 The Pharisees came and began to question Jesus. To test him, they asked him for a sign from heaven. He sighed deeply and said, *“Why does this generation ask for a sign? Truly I tell you, no sign will be given to it.”* Then he left them, got back into the boat and crossed to the other side. (vv.11-13 NIV)

Have you ever thought of yourself as a Pharisee? I have on occasion, but generally like to think of myself as a bit more humble. After this reading though, my conscience was pricked. How often have I questioned Jesus? How often have I tested Jesus? How often have I asked God for a sign?

God wants me to know His will and does not hide Himself or the path I am to take. But these verses caution me not to be more interested in a “sign” or tangible proof of what God is telling me. It is about my attitude. When the Pharisees insisted on a sign to test Jesus, that is when Jesus left them.

God wants me to trust and believe Him—not the outward signs or circumstances He chooses to allow. My attitude and intent are what matters. I choose to have faith in the person of Jesus—not what he does or doesn’t do. How about you?

Jeremiah 14:1-9, 17-22; Psalms 66, 67; Galatians 4:21—5:1

Monday, April 1

Psalm 89:1-18 Happy are those who hear the joyful call to worship, for they will walk in the light of your presence, *LORD*. (v.15 NLT)

In the readings for today there is a contrast between following sinful ways or righteous ways. It brought to mind the first days of when I came to know Christ in a personal relationship with him. I felt such a relief of heaviness. It was as if someone turned on the lights for me.

This psalm states what I was feeling. I was no longer bound to live with heaviness, enslaved to works of darkness. It was as if God was shining His light on me and the path He wanted me to take. My eyes were opened to the happiness of knowing and following God.

It is still a promise for me many years later. As I continue to walk with God, He provides light and direction for every step I take. Happiness and joy never get old, even though I do.

Jeremiah 16:10-21; Romans 7:1-12; John 6:1-15

Tuesday, April 2

John 6:16-27 *“But don’t be so concerned about perishable things like food. Spend your energy seeking the eternal life that the Son of Man can give you. For God the Father has given me the seal of his approval.”* (v.27)

Jesus had just fed a huge crowd. They all ate and were satisfied. There were even leftovers! But still they wanted more and sought Jesus out.

Jesus reveals the group’s real motive which was simply to be fed physically once again. The people were mostly interested in what Jesus could do for them. They seemed to completely miss the spiritual side of what he offered.

He told them it wasn’t about the things (bread and fish), but about seeking him and his kingdom. Sometimes you and I get it wrong too. We seek the hand of Jesus and not the person of Jesus. At times we may be more interested in the solution and end to our difficulty rather than in our spiritual growth and relationship with him. Today, may we be reminded to spend our energy on what really matters—seeking Jesus and becoming more like him.

Jeremiah 17:19-27; Psalms 97, 99, 100; Romans 7:13-25

Wednesday, April 3

John 6:27-40 Then Jesus declared, *“I am the bread of life.”* (v.35a NIV)

This metaphor Jesus uses for himself, as bread, is very telling. Jesus uses something very basic and accessible to most human beings. Even many poor people are able to buy or make bread. It is something basic. Simple. Needful.

Jesus is letting us know that a relationship with him is a basic necessity. Bread is something simple, basic, and needful. He is making himself available—even to poor. Jesus offers himself as what is the most essential. If we don’t eat or drink, we die. If we don’t have Jesus, we die—not just physically but also spiritually.

Are we partaking of this “Jesus bread” daily? Am I eating and filling myself up with him? It is simple. Needful. Are you hungry? Jesus says, “Come and eat.”

2 Jeremiah 18:1-11; Psalms 101, 109; Romans 8:1-11

Thursday, April 4

Romans 8:12-27 And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don’t know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. (v.26 NLT)

“I’m at a loss for words.” Have you ever spoken that phrase? There are two particular times I find myself in this position. One is when I am completely filled with joy and thanksgiving and want to give my entire being over to God in praise for all He has done. The second is when I am completely overwhelmed with sorrow or emotional distress. Both times, I find myself speechless.

I have a daughter who is a single mom to her five-year-old son. Life is hard for her. In prayer for her and my grandson, I can be easily overcome with emotion. Sometimes, I simply let tears come and ask the Holy Spirit to say to the Father what I cannot. Peace follows, knowing the Spirit has prayed exactly according to the Father’s will. What a marvelous assurance to have! Thank You, Father, for Your Son and the Holy Spirit who plead on our behalf.

Jeremiah 22:13-23; Psalm 69; John 6:41-51

Friday, April 5

Romans 8:28-39 Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? (v.35)

This portion of Scripture is so incredibly powerful! One can feel the excitement building as the words draw the chapter to a close: "nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God" (v.39).

We live in a fallen world. Daily, we face personal struggles, health crises, political turmoil, financial stress, and sometimes even spiritual disappointment. Even though I don't like to admit it or say it out loud, sometimes I wonder if circumstances will prevail instead of God. That is brutal honesty.

The apostle Paul is reminding us that despite circumstances—job loss, cancer, death of a loved one, hunger—God will love us and see us through. Our job is to let Him. Will you remain in the powerful love of God through Christ today?

Jeremiah 23:1-8; Psalm 102; John 6:52-59

Saturday, April 6

John 6:60-71 *"The Spirit alone gives eternal life. Human effort accomplishes nothing. And the very words I have spoken to you are spirit and life."* (v.63)

Many people think of themselves as "a good person." They might even say, "I'm a good person. I'm sure I will go to heaven." On the other hand, some people think they have done more good things for God than doing bad things during their life time.

Just like in this passage, some people find the gospel offensive and narrow-minded. And yet Jesus continues to speak truth. He reminds us that nothing we do in our own effort will be able to bring about spiritual life. We cannot earn God's love—or be good enough to get into heaven by what we do or don't do.

You might also have heard it said, "It's not about you." Jesus agrees. It's all about him, his work accomplished at the cross and his

work in us on our behalf. May we remember to feed on Jesus daily.
Let us allow the Spirit to bring us life.

Jeremiah 23:9-15; Psalms 107:33-43, 108; Romans 9:1-18

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