

Good News Daily

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Sunday, February 1

Mark 8:22-30 *And they came to Bethsaida. And some people brought to him a blind man, and begged him to touch him. And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the village; and when he had spit on his eyes and laid his hands upon him, he asked him, “Do you see anything?” And he looked up and said, “I see men; but they look like trees, walking.” Then again he laid his hands upon his eyes; and he looked intently and was restored, and saw everything clearly.”* (vv.22-25 RSV)

This miracle of Jesus is the only one he ever performed in two stages. In every other circumstance he spoke the word, and instantly the person was made whole. Jesus wants his disciples to see that they are like this blind man; that they, and we, need our eyes opened in two stages, as this blind man did.

Later in this passage, Peter identified Jesus as the Messiah, and that was the first stage. The disciples saw the things that were happening and observed what Jesus was doing and their eyes were being opened. This is what Jesus wanted them to know. He had been working with them to lead them to this understanding of who he was.

But now, once they know, he does a strange thing. He told them to tell no one about it. Why not send them out to tell the world? As in the healing of the blind man, they had only received that first touch, which opened their eyes to a part of the truth. They saw him, but not clearly. They saw his greatness and his glory. But they did not understand the secret of it. They still required the second touch, and this is what our Lord goes on to give in his suffering, death, and resurrection.

Genesis 18:6-33; Psalms 24, 29; Galatians 5:13-25

Monday, February 2

John 6:27-40 *Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of man will give to you; for on him has God the Father set his seal.” Then they said to him, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.”* (vv.26-29)

During the French Revolution, when the mobs of Paris were rioting and demonstrating outside the palace of Queen Marie Antoinette, protesting the poverty in which they lived, the queen inquired of her courtiers what the trouble was. They said to her, “They have no bread.” Marie Antoinette is remembered for her hard-hearted and indifferent reply, “Then let them eat cake.”

In this story in John’s Gospel a crowd of people are saying to Jesus, in effect, “We have no bread,” but the food he proposes instead is very different.

This bread of life is not something to be achieved but is gained by believing in him whom God has sent. Belief in God. Faith. So, in all things and at all times, search your motives in all that you do; are you doing all that you do because of your faith in God? As Mother Teresa said, “God wishes you to grow in your faith.”

Genesis 19:1-29; Psalms 56, 57, 58; Hebrews 11:1-12

Tuesday, February 3

Genesis 21:1-21 *So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water, and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child Ishmael, and sent her away.* (v.14a)

Does Ishmael represent something in our life in which we find comfort and delight and which we are reluctant to give up? Perhaps it is some long-standing habit that we have been defending. It can be anything. It may be something causing division and separation. It can be anything which we defend, protect, justify and delight in, just as Abraham defended, protected, and delighted in Ishmael—until the time came when he had to make this choice.

He loved this boy, and he didn't want to give him up. It was something that would cost him deeply.

I don't know what form Ishmael may be taking in your life, but I know there are times when God says to us, simply, this must go; no longer may it be permitted.

You know how Abraham obeyed. Early in the morning, he got up and took bread and a skin of water and though it cost him heartbreak to do it, sent Hagar and Ishmael out in obedience to God. Are we also willing to so obey?

Psalm 61, 62; Hebrews 11:13-22; John 6:41-51

Wednesday, February 4

Psalm 72 *Endow the king with your justice, O God, the royal son with your righteousness.* (v.1 NIV)

This prayer of David, probably used at a coronation or induction ceremony, is remarkable to me because of its similarity with inauguration and induction ceremonial prayers used today. How often have we heard these or similar words in the past as Supreme Court Justices, Presidents, and others are sworn into office?

However, saying these words alone does not bestow their meaning on those to whom they're directed. More is needed. Prayer, commitment, and obedience to God are necessary. It is shallow to think a coating of words will color actions like a coating of paint covers a surface.

We know that this prayer reflected the real desire of David, though even he fell outside its grace. Justice and righteousness—what greater virtues can one demonstrate? Seek justice and display mercy to those in your life as you are inducted into the kingdom of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

Genesis 22:1-18; Hebrews 11:23-31; John 6:52-59

Thursday, February 5

Psalm 71 *My mouth is filled with your praise, declaring your splendor all day long.* (v.8)

This verse reminds me of when I was a closing speaker at an annual conference of the Victim Offender Mediation Association (VOMA). VOMA is about healing the injuries caused by crime by facilitating face-to-face meetings with victims and their offenders.

Many who attended come from a faith background; many others, however, come to this work for entirely different reasons. Prior to my talk, during prayer, I sensed that I should "fill my mouth with praise" of God, but I wasn't comfortable with how to do that. I felt that my words of praise would be divisive for many in this crowd and wondered how to praise God, bringing others closer to Him, without shutting anyone down.

Have you recently been in that dilemma? I'm not sure how I did. I do know that I find it so much easier to talk with other Christians and not worry about how I praise God. But, I guess He often calls us out of our comfort zone, doesn't He? I am reminded of St. Francis of Assisi when he said, "We are called to preach the gospel [and praise God] at all times and, if necessary, use words."

Genesis 23:1-20; Psalm 70; Hebrews 11:32—12:2; John 6:60-71

Friday, February 6

Psalm 69 *You know my folly, O God; my guilt is not hidden from you. May those who hope in you not be disgraced because of me.* (vv.5-6)

We all know that we can fool other people sometimes; and we all know that we can never fool God anytime. So why do we try? Or why are we so negligent that we fail to heed God's wishes all the time?

We do fail. If we didn't, we would only need God's guidance but not His salvation. And His salvation is what makes us complete in Him!

My great fear, however, is that when I fail, someone else may be noticing and their faith may be impaired by my failure. That is the greatest harm. We all know that we must put our complete trust in God and not in ourselves. We will fail, but God will not. But that doesn't let us off the hook. Though not perfect, we should strive each day with each person to obey God and build one another's faith through support and accountability.

Genesis 24:1-27; Hebrews 12:3-11; John 7:1-13

Saturday, February 7

John 7:14-36 *About the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and taught. (v.14 RSV)*

Jesus, the great teacher. When he talked, people listened. They were captured by what he said. Why?

Jesus told them: "My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me. If any man's will is to do God's will, he shall know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority."

Doing God's will. This is a principle that runs all through life: we learn by doing. A lawyer may learn all that the law books can teach, but until he gets into court or negotiates a contract, he never really learns.

And for whose glory? Jesus did not seek his own glory. He spoke for God when and where he was called. He did not care whether he spoke to one person or a great crowd. What he said was always true and always compassionate, always from God, and he did not care whether anybody praised him or not. Others, too, may teach much that is true, but if their hearts are wrong, it will come without power and will not accomplish much. But if they are intent on God's message, care less of publicity and opinion, if they seek to get across what God has said, we can trust that kind of teacher and thank God for them.

Genesis 24:28-38, 49-51; Psalms 75, 76; Hebrews 12:12-29

by William Preston

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Sunday, February 8

2 Timothy 2:14-21 *Charge them before God not to quarrel about words....* (v.14a ESV)

People have enjoyed and relaxed with dancing all through history. The list of different dances is long and varied. What we don't see is anyone at the waltz doing a polka, or doing hip-hop at a minuet. They're all dances. But each dance is conducted with the cooperation of others. It's expected. It's good manners. It's courteous.

Today, people will gather in 10,000 different churches. The Bible will be read in languages old or new. Songs will be sung from books or screens or memory. Prayers will be heard loud or soft, long or short. Worshippers will stand, or kneel, or sit, hands lifted up or held calmly folded. Those who enjoy loud, excited events will seek out others with that temperament. Some will gather quietly. Ideally, there will be no contention about where anyone got baptized—or how wet they got.

Jesus will be present at them all. He wants his family at peace, with him and with each other. Dancing works best when everyone stays in step.

Genesis 24:50-67; Psalm 93, 96; Mark 10:13-22

Monday, February 9

Genesis 25:19-34 *"If it is thus, why is this happening to me?"* (v.22b)

When people lose something, it's common to hear two outbursts. "I've looked everywhere!" and "It's always in the last place you look!"

The remark about the *last place* is true because we usually stop searching when we find what's missing. We don't look further. But where have we looked at first? We're accustomed to being blamed—or deserving blame—so we commonly start by assuming ownership. Rebekah did. "Why is *this* happening to *me*?" But, this time, it wasn't about her. She was just the bystander God had used to further carry out His purpose. Like the poor guy beaten on the road to Jericho and waiting for someone to help (Luke 10:25ff). God was using him to examine the hearts of the priest, the Levite, and the Good Samaritan passing by.

Sometimes it's not about us. It's about what God is doing all around us. We get to play a part, even when God doesn't explain everything to us right away.

Psalm 80; Hebrews 13:1-16; John 7:37-52

Tuesday, February 10

Psalm 78:1-39 *They forgot his works....* (v.11a)

I grew up in an attractive, modern church building. The pastors taught the words of God's Word faithfully each week. I never had doubts about what God had said. I sat in light, surrounded by walls made of undecorated, colored panes of glass.

Later in life, I attended a church built a few years before I was born. The teachers there were also faithful to the Bible. But in this church, I was surrounded by stained glass pictures of the life of Jesus and many saints who had followed him. These reminded us that God had done more than talk. He had fed crowds, healed them, led them through all kinds of obstacles. He made promises and kept commitments. There were real deeds, filling the daily lives of real people. And there were names and dates on small signs all around us. These were testimonies and reminders to those of us who only heard their stories long afterwards.

Their testimonies called to us. "Don't forget. God did more than talk. We saw him in action."

Genesis 26:1-6, 12-33; Hebrews 13:17-25; John 7:53—8:11

Wednesday, February 11

Romans 12:1-8 *Think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.* (v.3)

Rebekah told her son, Jacob, "Listen only to me." Blind Isaac still could notice that the young man speaking to him at that moment sounded like Jacob but felt hairy like Esau. The two things did not match.

Pharisees objected that Jesus had no one else but himself witnessing for his identity. They ignored the confirming evidence of what God in heaven was saying and doing for His son, and had *already* said about him in the Scriptures.

Paul took instruction from Deuteronomy 19:15, that a single witness was not enough to confirm a claim. We draw on the sound reason of Scripture to guide our steps. Those words do not pass away. But reason and understanding alone are not enough for anyone. We must also draw on the distinct, separate indications of the trust God grows in us through our memory and experiences of His faithfulness.

Genesis 27:1-29; Psalm 119:97-120; John 8:12-20

Thursday, February 12

Psalm 147 *He determines the number of the stars; he gives to all of them their names.* (v.4)

There are actual events, and there are headlines where we find out about those events. The events do not get repeated. They don't need to be. They have happened. That's enough. The headlines get repeated and passed from one person to another. People say they "know what happened" from the headlines, the descriptions, even if they were not witnesses to the unrepeatable, original events.

Esau wept when Isaac said he'd already given his blessing to someone else. The event was done. He could not repeat it. But Esau's tears of anguish were real, new facts of life, even though he was only hearing a headline of history from his dad.

God made every individual star. He gave them individual names so we could talk about them and sort them out from each other. Even when those names get changed, ignored, or forgotten, the actual, original stars exist to be seen by all.

Our individual lives before God are the same.

Genesis 27:30-45; Psalm 83, 146; Romans 12:9-21; John 8:21-32

Friday, February 13

Genesis 27:46—28:4, 10-22 *"Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it."* (v.16)

My life has looked different to me from the opposite ends of it. As a child, I stared at the very church platform from which I would later marry my wife, a girl I had only known for a couple of years by then. I wanted to work at jobs that would fire me, or that I would abandon. Those transitions opened opportunities for me to meet people who became significant new friends, mentors who wrote entirely unexpected chapters in my life.

Seeing all of this now, I appreciate God was truly in my life, shaping my days in ways I did not recognize in the midst of the long journey. I hear St. Paul's admonition ("The hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed.") with greater sobriety now.

The Lord was always in all the places of my life, whether I knew it or not.

Psalm 88; Romans 13:1-14; John 8:33-47

Saturday, February 14

John 8:47-59 *"You have not known him. I know him."* (v.55a)

Today, lots of people have shared Valentine cards. Those cards have been given to people in all kinds of situations. There are very few, if any, that have been sent to strangers unmet and not known by the senders.

Jesus drew a distinction between those who knew *of* God, who knew lots of stories and history *about* God, but did not have any personal relationship *with* God. They knew about God as a milestone, a

marker on the road, but not as one who had any authority over their steps. They heard and knew words, but did not know the one who had spoken them. They were happy to get a Valentine card in the mail. But they didn't concern themselves with who had signed it.

It matters who has sent you mail. That's how you sort out and discard junk mail and spam. You don't want to respond to all of it. Say thanks for the Valentine cards from people who know you.

They're the ones who love you.

Genesis 29:1-20; Psalms 87, 90; Romans 14:1-23

by Rick Hoover

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Sunday, February 15

2 Corinthians 3:7-18 *But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.* (v.16 NIV)

All through life we find ourselves in situations that are difficult to understand and tough to deal with. These can be times wrought with anxiety and frustration, worry and perplexity. These are the times when we are trying so hard to figure out what to do, relying on our own intellect and common sense, and perhaps even seeking guidance from others, asking for advice and the wisdom of the world, but not finding peace with any of the answers. Seeing our problems only on the earthly level is like looking through a veil: vision is limited, fuzzy, dim.

“But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.” When we receive Christ into our hearts, he lifts the veil from our hearts and eyes and we are no longer slaves to our sins, limited in love and understanding. We can rejoice that we see clearly and deeply through Jesus’ eyes. “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.” Praise God for giving us new life and clear vision!

Proverbs 26:1-23; Psalms 148, 149, 150; Luke 9:18-27

Monday, February 16

Philippians 2:1-13 *He humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross.* (v.8)

Humility sometimes seems to be a lost word in today’s culture. Rarely do journalists writing about famous people describe their subjects as “humble.” More often we read of their great financial “success,” their brilliant minds, their “luck” at having been in the right place at the right time, their competitiveness or perhaps their sheer determination to accomplish their goals. Smart, savvy, strong, tough—these are often the admired characteristics. But what about humility? Why do so many people equate humility with weakness?

Perhaps because they have never met our Lord, nor known anyone filled with his Holy Spirit. The ultimate act of humility and obedience was Jesus going to the cross for us, being willing to die so that others might live. This was not an indication of weakness, but rather of supreme courage, strength, and love. Humility through obedience to his Father in heaven resulted in the greatest gift anyone could ever be given: eternal life through faith in Jesus.

Father, take us deeper in our love and understanding of You, and appreciation of the most humble act of all time, Your Son’s incarnation, death, and resurrection. May this inspire humility in us.

Proverbs 27:1-6, 10-12; Psalm 25; John 18:15-18, 25-27

Tuesday, February 17

John 18:28-38 *And to avoid ceremonial uncleanness the Jews did not enter the palace; they wanted to be able to eat the Passover.* (v.28b)

It’s so easy to spot hypocrisy in other people, isn’t it? In this passage we have a group of Jews intent on getting Jesus, an innocent man, murdered. These treacherous men with wicked hearts are very careful, however, not to break any of the ceremonial laws that would prevent their participating in worship at the temple or celebrating a feast. So, they stayed outside the palace of the Roman governor, as entering the house of a Gentile would cause a Jewish person to be ceremonially defiled. What hypocrites! Plot a murder but keep your hands clean.

Someone once said that the reason we can so readily see another person’s sin is because we have committed that sin ourselves. I believe this is often quite true. When I read this passage from John’s Gospel, I thought instantly of the blatant hypocrisy of these men. And then the Lord showed me instances in my own life when I have been quite hypocritical. This is humbling. This points up my own sinfulness and my need to confess, repent, and receive forgiveness.

Lord, when we see the sinfulness of others, turn our eyes inward and our hearts to You.
Proverbs 30:1-4, 24-33; Psalms 26, 28; Philippians 3:1-11

Wednesday, February 18

Luke 18:9-14 *“For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”* (v.14b)

This parable was told by Jesus, “to some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else.” The Pharisee was so proud of himself and told God (and those listening) how thankful he was that he didn’t sin like other men, especially the tax collector. At the same time, the tax collector was focusing on his own sinfulness, rather than the sins of others, and was pleading for God’s mercy. He knew who he was, and he knew who God was, and he knew that he needed God and His grace.

This parable could be characterized as hypocrisy vs. humility. It shows us that the Lord is not pleased when we are prideful about all the things we are doing “for him.” We can teach Sunday School, attend services three times a week, raise money for the church building fund, visit the sick, sing in the choir, attend Bible studies, etc. But, if we fail to recognize our own sinfulness and our great need of God’s grace, we are on the wrong track. Sooner or later such pride will be our undoing.

Dearest Lord Jesus, thank you for clothing us in your humility when we but ask. Thank you for sending Jesus to illustrate on the cross that “he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Amos 5:6-15; Psalms 95, 32, 143; Hebrews 12:1-14

Thursday, February 19

Habakkuk 3:1-18 *“I stand in awe of your deeds, O LORD.”* (v.2b)

What do you stand in awe of? When I think of the Lord and begin to answer this question for myself, it seems as if there could be no limit to the number of things I could list. This is especially true if I sit on my patio on a beautiful, sunny, quiet morning and observe the beauty of God’s creation. I am in awe of flowers—their colors, their variety, their scents, their gracefulness. I am in awe of birds and butterflies—what must it be like to fly? Are there any colors God doesn’t use on their wings? I am in awe of trees, both great and small—they provide shade and shelter, food and lodging for a myriad of animals, from ants to squirrels to people. I know that there are many lessons God can teach me from observing the natural world.

But then I turn to my Bible, and I really stand in awe of all it has to teach me of the Lord and His deeds. Words are inadequate. From Creation to Resurrection, God shows His love again and again. I stand in awe of His power, His grace, His unfathomable and unconditional love, His timelessness, His forgiveness, His understanding and acceptance of me, His faithfulness, His unchanging nature, His patience, His kindness, His wisdom, His generosity, His gentleness, His might, the gift to me of His peace which truly passes all understanding.

Thank You, Lord for who You are, an awesome God.

Psalm 37:1-18; Philippians 3:12-21; John 17:1-8

Friday, February 20

Philippians 4:1-9 *“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.”* (v.6)

Paul is not merely making a suggestion that we (or the Philippians) should think about and debate and then decide for ourselves whether or not this is something worthy for us to consider. He is actually echoing the words of Jesus we find in the sixth chapter of Matthew: “Do not worry about your life...Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?...So do not worry...But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” All the instructions that Jesus gave during his time on the earth should be thought of as commands, not suggestions.

When we obey such commands, the results are absolutely glorious. Paul continues in Philippians 4:7, “And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” His peace is a gift to us when we battle worry by coming to God in prayer and casting all our burdens on Him.

Help us, Father, to bring an end to our anxiety by trusting in You and by learning to pray without ceasing.

Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32; Psalms 95, 31; John 17:9-19

Saturday, February 21

Philippians 4:10-20 *I can do everything through him who gives me strength. (v.13)*

These words of Paul I find so very encouraging and hopeful. Some years ago I studied Philippians in a small group Bible study, and I discovered that Paul was actually imprisoned in Rome when he penned this joyful letter to the church at Philippi. Isn't it amazing that despite the hardships Paul faced in spreading the gospel, he could still rejoice in the Lord, regardless of his circumstances? Even in prison, Paul is unafraid of what the future holds because he knows that Christ will strengthen him and equip him for anything and everything.

When I find myself faced with a daunting task or an uncertain future or any situation that presents potential fear, worry, or anxiety, I try to remember Paul and the very real dangers that confronted him. Then I repeat over and over again to myself, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

Praise God!

Ezekiel 39:21-29; Psalms 30, 32; John 17:20-26

by Anna Cash

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Sunday, February 22

John 12:44-50 *"I have come into the world as light, so that no one who has faith in me should remain in darkness."* (v.46 NIV)

One of the dictionary definitions of "light" is spiritual awareness and illumination, and though Jesus certainly offers us spiritual awareness and illumination, his words and life give us much more. Because he is the light which has come into the world, we now see the world differently. The Christian sees nature and its mysteries as the creation of a loving God who revealed Himself to us in the person of Jesus Christ. In the magnificent words of Gerard Manley Hopkins, nature is "charged with the grandeur of God."

For those who believe in him, Jesus the Light also casts out all darkness. He enables us to see his creation with awe and wonder. He dispels the darkness of fear and anxiety. He reveals the sharp contrast between the ways of the world and the works of God. No physical, spiritual, emotional, or moral darkness can remain in those who trust the God of love and light.

Daniel 9:3-10; Psalms 63, 98; Hebrews 2:10-18

Monday, February 23

1 Corinthians 1:1-19 *I appeal to you, my friends, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ: agree among yourselves, and avoid divisions; let there be complete unity of mind and thought.* (v.10)

On the night before he died, Jesus prayed for the unity of his disciples "that the world may know that you sent me and you loved them as you loved me." The unity of Christians in faith and love can witness powerfully to the love of God and offer an irresistible invitation to those who don't know Him to accept Christ as their Savior.

Unfortunately, we Christians do not often manifest the unity Christ prayed for. Our congregations all too easily become battlegrounds over the most trivial matters. Secular and Christian periodicals daily provide convincing evidence of the tendency of Christians to fight with one another over the slightest provocation. The Corinthian church forgot, and the contemporary church continues to forget that the source of our unity is the Christ who was nailed to the cross. How can the church proclaim him when its members are so ready to crucify one another?

Jesus has called us to a better way.

Genesis 37:1-11; Psalms 41, 52; Mark 1:1-13

Tuesday, February 24

1 Corinthians 1:20-31 *Jews demand signs, Greeks look for wisdom, but we proclaim Christ nailed to the Cross; and though this is an offense to Jews and folly to Gentiles, yet to those who are called, Jews and Greeks alike, he is the power of God and the wisdom of God.* (vv.22-24)

The image of Christ nailed to a cross doesn't find much favor in Christian circles these days, even among members of denominations where crucifixes are likely to be displayed and honored. To the secular world, the cross is even more of a mystery. This fact is exemplified by the salesperson who asked a woman buying a cross whether she wanted a plain one or the one with the little man on it.

Paul proclaimed a Christ nailed to the cross. He proclaimed an offense and foolishness to the world. He contradicted what a sinful humanity wanted in a god: a god made in the image and likeness of humans, a god who condoned human lusts and exalted worldly power. Paul pointed to the power and wisdom of the God-man nailed to the cross and told us to "boast" about this Lord. If the image of Jesus nailed to the cross causes us discomfort, if the depiction of the suffering God makes us uneasy, how can we find in him "our righteousness, our holiness, and our liberation" (1 Corinthians 1:30)?

Genesis 37:12-24; Psalm 45; Mark 1:14-28

Wednesday February 25

1 Corinthians 2:1-13 *I resolved that while I was with you I would not claim to know anything but Jesus Christ, Christ nailed to the cross. I came before you in weakness, in fear and in great trepidation.* (vv.2-3)

Some of the members of my church have urged me to preach more “resurrection sermons” stressing the joys of life and appealing to the inherent “goodness” of the human spirit. I confess that I often preach about the cross, perhaps because I believe that we all need to be reminded of the lengths to which God would go to give us true happiness and joy, and perhaps because I see in the cross of Jesus God’s solidarity with suffering humanity.

Paul felt so strongly about proclaiming the crucified Christ because he experienced in his personal fears and inadequacies the power of Christ revealed by faith in God’s grace. There are moments in our lives, times of fear, anxiety, aimlessness, sinfulness, and loneliness, when our only recourse is to the crucified Christ. On those occasions, Christ the teacher, Christ the miracle worker, Christ the light, and Christ the truth and the way, give way to the Crucified One who by his cross redeems our suffering and brings us peace.

Genesis 37:25-36; Psalm 119:49-72; Mark 1:29-45

Thursday, February 26

Mark 2:1-12 *When he saw their faith, Jesus said to the man, “My son your sins are forgiven.”* (v.5)

One of God’s great blessings in contemporary Christianity is the ministry of healing. Evidences of God’s power abound in the healing of physical illnesses, the relief of emotional problems and distress, and the restoration of relationships. God continues to work miracles in our midst just as Jesus did some two thousand years ago.

Miracles of physical and psychological healing, however, tend to distract us from the greatest miracle of healing: the forgiveness of sin which leads to reconciliation with God. The greater miracle for the man who was paralyzed was the forgiveness of his personal sin which Jesus pronounced over him.

Sometimes, we are disappointed when physical and emotional healing doesn’t happen. That shouldn’t come as any great surprise to us: the only miraculous healing that God absolutely guarantees to those who come to Him in faith is the forgiveness of our sins.

Genesis 39:1-23; Psalm 50; 1 Corinthians 2:14—3:15

Friday, February 27

1 Corinthians 3:16-23 *Surely you know that you are God’s temple, where the Spirit of God dwells. Anyone who destroys God’s temple will himself be destroyed by God, because the temple of God is holy; and you are that temple.* (v.16)

Scholars tell us that the Greek word for “temple” used by Paul refers to the sanctuary, the very place in the temple structure where God dwells, and that the “you” refers to the local congregation. As a devout Jew, Paul once believed that the great Temple of Herod in Jerusalem was the place where God’s glory dwelled in a special way. The passionate disciple of Jesus understood that the Spirit of God is present wherever Christians build their life together on the foundation of Jesus Christ.

Individual Christians are also the temples of God when they build their lives on the foundation of Christ. Individually and corporately, Christians become the dwelling places of God’s glory. If I believe this to be true, why do I treat this temple so shabbily with my weak faith, my sins of the flesh, and my willingness to seek spiritual wisdom in the cunning of the worldly wise?

Genesis 40:1-23; Psalms 40, 54; Mark 2:13-22

Saturday, February 28

1 Corinthians 4:1-7 *My friend, what makes you so important? What do you possess that was not given to you? And if you received it as a gift, why take the credit to yourself?* (v.7)

So much effort in American society is expended on self-promotion. Resume writing workshops teach us how to describe our work experience so that even the humblest tasks can enhance our prospects

for employment. Television has a glut of award shows which honor the “best” this or that. The number of “lifetime achievement” awards seems to grow exponentially every year.

Each one of us is tempted to believe that we are responsible for the blessings we have received, that we have earned them through our own efforts. Paul reminds us that we are all stewards who are called to be trustworthy and warns us that we are to avoid the pitfalls of pride and judging others. We have received all things as a gift, from life itself to the abilities which have enabled us to achieve.

An awareness of our utter dependence on God even for those things we are inclined to take credit for may make us less willing to assert our claims and to presume God’s commendation for all we do. We may find ourselves saying “Thank you, Lord” many times daily.

Genesis 41:1-13; Psalm 55; Mark 2:23—3:6

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