



ST. TIMOTHY'S TIMES

DAILY DEVOTIONAL READING

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PO Box 380 Winter Park, Florida 32790

Prayer for St. Timothy's

*Most loving God, whose wisdom
has guided St. Timothy's
Anglican Church
since its beginning,
stir up your Spirit in our midst
and lead us forward in the work
we are called to do.*

*Enable this congregation to
continue in service to you and
in ministry within and
beyond our walls.*

*Cleanse us of petty rivalries,
sensitivities, vanities,
discourtesies – everything
which distracts us, thus freeing
us to rejoice in the good
performed by others.*

*Grant that we may be united in
a common purpose and share in
a single spirit...
your Spirit, Lord.*

*Bless our work together that we
may faithfully envision what you
are calling us to be and to do,
and bless our efforts to be
faithful to your calling.*

*Grant that your attractive
goodness may be seen in all our
faces, your warm accents of
love heard in all our words, and
in our lives may we show
something of you to
all the world.*

*Through Jesus Christ our Lord,
AMEN.*

Monday, January 1

Birthdays:

Prayers for: Blake & Lauren Muskiet, Ethan, Parker; Cliff & Colleen Nelson; Mark & Alice Norman; Dele Oduola

Matthew 1:18-25 **"She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." (v.21)**

When newspapers were around, I used to look forward to the comic strips. These days, I find my jokes on internet memes. I am a sucker for wordplay. One recent favorite had a picture of the Earth as seen from outer space. "I love the way the Earth rotates," the meme headline said. "It really makes my day." Shame me if you must, but yes, I laughed at the way the familiar words were reinterpreted. If words are not properly understood, the confusion is not always funny. The angel passed along God's exact instructions to Joseph. Joseph listened, obeyed, and named Mary's child Jesus as he had been told to do. The name had significance because Jesus was significant. His name would be his introduction to people who needed him even before they would meet him. His name would get mentioned everywhere, stirring people's interest in meeting the One carrying that name. That name still stirs responses today. I am not ashamed of it, or the One who bears it.

Isaiah 62:1-5, 10-12; Psalm 103; Revelation 19:11-16

Tuesday, January 2

Birthdays: Carolyn Benson, Ed Bock, Sharon McAllister

Prayers for: Angel & Arianna Cavazos; Emeka & Ada Nwankwo, Arinze; Kemi Oduola, Francisca, Gabriel

1 Kings 19:1-8 **"Arise and eat, for the journey is too great for you." (v.7b)**

I am now in my 70's. I look back on days where I didn't know what to do next. Days when I lost my job of the moment. Days when new jobs came looking for me. The day my wife and I met (in a Sunday school class) we both had given up on dating or ever finding a life mate. There were plenty of moments when the journey, even as a Christian, had seemed too great to continue. Elijah was facing a moment like that when he woke up to find an angel standing by with directions for him on what to do next. Elijah had tried to lose himself in the wilderness as he fled from danger. God found him anyway. God agreed the journey was more than Elijah could handle on his own. He helped his servant keep going anyway. The psalmist had been there already. "You let men ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water; yet you have brought us out to a place of abundance" (Psalm 66:12). That's the rest of the story!

Psalms 66, 67; Ephesians 4:1-16; John 6:1-14

Wednesday, January 3

Birthdays: Paul Daigle, Kyra Huckaby, Don Ishler

Prayers for: Nnochiri & Chika Ojirika, Amarachi, Dinichi; Jeffrey & Jane Okon, Judith, Joan, Jeremy; Joe & Dawn Ontiveros, Hannah, Sophia

Ephesians 4:17-32 **You must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. (vv.17-18)**

England's Baroness Claire Fox popularized the term "snowflake generation" in her 2016 book *I Find That Offensive!* The moniker applies to emotionally fragile people hiding in safe spaces to avoid being triggered by ideas they don't like. Censors claim they're shielding us from "misinformation." They say free speech is too risky. A century ago, humorist Ring Lardner sardonically depicted this behavior with a character having an argument in a story: "'Shut up,' he explained." Self-absorption and self-confidence blind a person. They condemn us to stay where we started—in ignorance. When crowds followed him just to see more miracles rather than hear his teaching, Jesus rebuked the people he had been sent to rescue. God has created us with ears to hear. We should.

1 Kings 19:9-18; Psalm 68; John 6:15-27

Thursday, January 4

Birthdays:

Prayers for: Rudy & Trisha Ortiz; Alexander & Dawn Osaji, Brittany, Emmanuel, Alexandra; James & Caroline Osteen; Jennifer Parker, Chloe

Psalm 87 "All my springs are in you." (v.7b)

In 2008, the BBC broadcast an unusual series: Extreme Pilgrim. Anglican rector Peter Owen-Jones explored the ascetic spiritual practices of Shaolin monks in China, Hindu Sadhus in the Himalayan mountains of India, and Coptic Christian monks of St. Anthony's 4th Century monastery in Egypt. He spent three weeks in solitude where Anthony had established the Desert Fathers traditions. Fr. Peter used a small handheld camera to record his own daily hours while in isolation there. His mentor, Fr. Lazarus, an Australian professor converted from atheism, loaned him a small cave he had dug into the mountain. The season of intensive Christian prayer clearly touched Fr. Peter deeply. As a gift, Fr. Peter assembled a stone marker with a quote from Psalm 87:7. It was a fitting thought for a wilderness encounter with the Lord. When it was time to walk back down the mountain, Fr. Peter had a refreshed and renewed sense of his own ministry calling. To our grateful surprise, even in the dry seasons and deserts of our years, Jesus provides springs of refreshment with his presence.

Joshua 3:14—4:7; Psalm 85; Ephesians 5:1-20; John 9:1-12, 35-38

Friday, January 5

Birthdays: Grace Kenney

Prayers for: Chris & Meagan Patton, Christopher, Cohen; Dcn John & Tracy Pegues; Steve & Carol Powell; Chris & Nanette Radke; David & Carol Ray

John 11:17-27, 38-44 Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." (v.23)

I was a young child when the first cloverleaf highway interchange was built in my hometown. The interstate passing by met one of our major city crosstown streets. The cloverleaf design allowed traffic to merge from any direction without the need for a traffic light. At its opening, my younger brothers and I pestered dad to drive us on a complete tour through all the compass points of the whole majestic set of looping curves. It struck me funny that, on a cloverleaf, in order to go in one direction, you had to start by going in the opposite direction. You never had to turn around. You just had to keep going. Before long the road would curve and line you up to where you wanted to go. It felt counter-intuitive. It required patience. It was a life lesson. Jesus stayed calm at the bad news about Lazarus. He knew where the curve in the road would end up. And he's driving me. It's another life lesson.

Jonah 2:2-9; Psalms 2, 110; Ephesians 6:10-20

Saturday, January 6

Birthdays: Xavien Martinez, Donna Settles

Prayers for: Mike & Cecelia Railey; Alan & Jan Rendl; Laura Rendon, Evelyn, Alizha, Angilina; Martha Rodabaugh, Lauren, Cassie; Kathy Rohm

Matthew 12:14-21 "He will not quarrel or cry aloud, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets." (v.19)

Today is the Twelfth Day of Christmas, the Feast of the Epiphany when we hear about the Magi. We are noticing them. They themselves were noticing Jesus. Christmas traditionalists leave their Christmas tree and decorations up until today, only now taking everything down for storage. Melanie leaves all our decorations hanging on our compact tree and stores it all that way, ready for a quick reappearance next Thanksgiving. During the year, no one would guess the purpose of the strange, bagged object hidden in a closet. We find other ways to announce and celebrate our love for Jesus the rest of the year. We bring out the tree as a central decoration to celebrate Christmas. What people always notice are the ornaments on the tree. These are all different. But they are only there because the tree is there. It's a bit like all the different churches and denominations. People notice them. But none of them would be there if Jesus had not made his appearance. Seeing and noticing him, any time of the year, is the important Epiphany.

Isaiah 49:1-7; Psalms 46, 97; Revelation 21:22-27

Sunday, January 7

Birthdays: Byron Clark, Gabriela Gonzales, Yanelly Gonzales

Prayers for: David Ronkainen; Angel & Connie Rosa, Tyann, Matthew, Sara; Robert Rusinovich; Corinne Sandifer; Jon & Jensy Santos, Penelope

Psalm 147 Great is our Lord and mighty in power; his understanding has no limit. (v.5 NIV)

After many years of walking with the Lord, I find that while my understanding of His power, might, and greatness has grown and deepened, I know that I have not yet fully comprehended all that He is. Today's reading in Genesis gives us a look at one of His greatest acts of power: creation. Imagine nothingness...then the Lord speaks and the heavens and earth, night and day, waters and dry land, plants and animals, man and woman are all brought into existence. It is awesome, to say the least. My small mind can't quite totally understand it, even though I completely believe it. However, Psalm 147:5 tells us that God's understanding has no limit. We may not fully understand God, but we know that He has limitless understanding of us. Now that is a very exciting thought! He knows us better than we will ever know ourselves and He loves us so much that He gave up His only son to redeem us from our sinfulness. Thank You, Father, for the comfort it brings to know that Your understanding has no bounds.

Genesis 1:1—2:3; Psalm 146; Ephesians 1:3-14; John 1:29-34

Monday, January 8

Birthdays:

Prayers for: Horacio & Leticia Salazar, Elizabeth, Horacio, Victor, Santos, Alberto; Charles & Dcn Jennifer Scherzer; Ronnie Sefcik; Valerie Shepherd

John 1:1-18 No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known. (v.18)

How blessed we are to be able to freely read and study the Bible. The Holy Spirit reveals Jesus to us through the Bible, and as we grow in our faith in and knowledge of Jesus, we come to see who God our father is, even though we cannot physically see Him. Hebrews 1:3 tell us that "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word." How gracious of God to send us His One and Only Son, so that we can better understand God, and more importantly, so that we may have salvation through Jesus' shed blood and be reunited with our heavenly Father. All through Jesus' ministry he told his followers that he and his Father were united as one, and that every word he spoke was that of his Father. In John 7:16, Jesus says, "My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me," and in John 14:7 he says, "If you really knew me you would know my Father as well." Thank You, Father, for so graciously revealing Yourself to us through Jesus. Thank you, Jesus, for being the obedient Son and for doing the will of your father so that all we believers might have everlasting life through you.

Genesis 2:4-25; Psalms 1, 2, 3; Hebrews 1:1-14

Tuesday, January 9

Birthdays: Leticia Salazar

Prayers for: Warren & Donna Settles, Linden, Ethan, Deanna; Jack & Summer Sherrod, Braylee; Laura Shipman, Emilia; Brenda Spiess

Psalm 5 In the morning, O LORD, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation. (v.3)

This verse suggests two ways to pray: (1) at a good time: in the morning and (2) in an effective manner: expectantly. It has been my experience that not praying first thing in the morning or not praying expectantly results in a generally lousy day for me. When I get up and start my day without speaking to my Father, I am saying, in effect, "I don't really need Your help today, Lord. I am so smart and capable; I'll handle whatever comes along." Also, when I do start my day with prayer, but with no enthusiasm for what God might do this day, I am not really believing in His power, love, and grace. How foolish! You don't have to be a "morning person" in order to start each day with the Lord. Just take an extra few minutes to praise Him for who He is, thank Him for all you have, ask His blessing and guidance for the day, and lift up the needs of others. And you don't have to be a "Pollyanna" in order to pray expectantly. All you have to do is claim His promises and believe what He tells you. Then you will know in your heart that He is always at work, even if you can't see it at the moment. "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you" (Matthew 7:7).

Genesis 3:1-24; Psalm 6; Hebrews 2:1-10; John 1:19-28

Wednesday, January 10

Birthdays: Nina Torres

Prayers for: David & Nina Sierra, Alondra, Andrea; Frank & Pat Stahl; Lee & Dianna Stein; Bennett & Franne Stewart; Lee & Carole Stoerner

Hebrews 2:11-18 Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. (vv.14-15)

How wonderful of Jesus to suffer the agony of the cross for us. Incredible, indescribable, unfathomable love. His resurrection shows us that life doesn't end with death. The truth is, death is not an end, but rather a beginning. Death is a passageway to eternal, sorrow-free, joy-filled life with Jesus, a life in which there will be no pain, suffering, anxiety, worry, dread, fear, misunderstanding, anger, sadness, or disappointment. What a glorious life we believers have ahead of us! Full and total communion with God and Jesus will be ours to enjoy forever. Before I gave my life to Jesus, I was just what this Scripture describes: a person held in slavery by my fear of death. What could there be after life on earth? Nothingness? Darkness? I couldn't bring my mind into any concept of what it might be like. Not knowing Jesus, I was held in bondage to all kinds of fears and did not realize where they came from. Now I know the truth and the truth has set me free (see John 8:31-32). Thank you, Jesus.

Genesis 4:1-16; Psalm 119:1-24; John 1:29-42

Thursday, January 11

Birthdays: Wayne Ballentine, Blake Muskiet

Prayers for: Anne Sundquist; Fred & Charlotte Talley; Linda Tervay; Roman & Caileigh Thaxton, Kinzleigh, Kendall, Karmin; Greg & Terry Thomas

John 1:43-51 Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." (v.45)

Philip was excited to have found the Messiah and to have been found by the Messiah. (Verse 43 tells us that Jesus found Philip and said to him, "Follow me.") Philip sought out his friend Nathanael and persuaded him to come and meet Jesus. Upon meeting Jesus, Nathanael was surprised to learn that Jesus already knew him (v.48), and because of this, he immediately professed his belief in Jesus as the Messiah. I have some dear friends who were excited when they found Jesus, and they sought me out in order to introduce me to him. It took some time and a lot of prayer, but eventually I came to know Jesus and believe that he is the son of God. Now I am a "follower." My heart is full of love and gratitude for these dear ones who pointed me to the Savior and loved and prayed for me until I finally saw the Light and came into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Who brought you to Jesus? Have you thanked them? Isn't there someone you should introduce to Jesus? Pray about these things.

Genesis 4:17-26; Psalm 18:1-20; Hebrews 3:1-11

Friday, January 12

Birthdays: Patrick Howard

Prayers for: Lucy Tischler; Jim & Elaine Tummy; Mary Lee Turk; Daniel & Edith Valdez, Eric, Hiroshi, Yuriko; Jose & Brenda Valencia

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)

Everyone needs a kind word from time to time, and Christians in particular need to be encouraged daily by one another to be steadfast in their walk with Christ, trusting and obeying the Master in order to reap the rewards of true faith: peace, love, joy, and grace from on high. We need to show love and gratitude to one another; these are actions that flow naturally from a heart filled with love for Jesus Christ. Why do we need encouraging? The writer of Hebrews says so that we will not become “hardened by sin’s deceitfulness.” Sin of all types, sizes, and descriptions is always deceitful. Initially it may seem lovely, attractive, harmless, and generally speaking, “just fine.” But sin is deceptive; it is never what it seems. Ultimately, sin always destroys, it never edifies. We see an example of this in Genesis. When God was discussing their initial act of disobedience with Adam and Eve and God asked Eve what she had done, she answered, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” (Genesis 3:13) Satan is the Great Deceiver, the father of all lies. Let us love and encourage one another everyday to trust and obey our Lord and, as James 4:7-8 instructs us, “Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you.”

Genesis 6:1-8; Psalms 16, 17; John 2:1-12

Saturday, January 13

Birthdays: Neale Ziebell

Prayers for: Dick & Marlene Van Horne; George & Sandra Vick; Brian & Sara Volante, Luke, Blake; Chris & Lisa Wanner; Hap & Phyllis Warren

Hebrews 4:1-13 Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account. (v.13)

Hard to imagine, isn’t it? God knows everything about every person who ever lived. On a personal level, this means that God knows every thought I’ve ever had, the good, the bad, and the ugly. He knows every single word I have uttered since I was a toddler, just learning to speak. God knows everything I’ve ever done, every emotion I’ve ever felt. God knows things about me that my husband, children, and closest friends don’t know. I may be able to hide my true feelings from some people, but never from God. With all of me “uncovered and laid bare” before God, I find it astonishing that He loves me so much. I am sinful and imperfect, but I am forgiven, restored, and redeemed through the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ. What a comforting and encouraging thought. All believers are called to give account of ourselves to the Lord, and this at times can be a scary prospect. But the truth is, the closer we draw to Him, the easier it becomes to confess, repent, and then bask in His wonderful gifts of grace and forgiveness. Thank You, Lord, that You know me better than I know myself, and that You love me unconditionally. Help me to love You and others more and more each day.

Genesis 6:9-22; Psalms 20, 21; John 2:13-22

Sunday, January 14

Birthdays:

Prayers for: Ray & Suzi Waters; Dave & Helen Weigand, Alaina, Cassie, Charlie, Emma; Cathy Weisser, Caydence, Camilla, Carsyn; Anita Wolfe

Ephesians 4:1-16 So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up. (vv.11-12 NIV)

Paul loved to make lists. (Think of what he’d have done with a refrigerator door!) And the list here is an important one because it lays a foundation not for a hierarchy of importance, but a shared effort. It is the task of the apostle and the prophet and the evangelist and the teacher, to say nothing of the countless other ministries within the body of Christ, the Church, to work together to build up the body. This is so that the body, whole and entire, can proclaim the presence of the living Lord of life to those who do not yet know about him. Occasionally we run into people who think that somehow their gifts, their charisms, are given them for their own enjoyment. Nothing could be further from the truth, for the offering of all—all—the gifts is necessary for the good of the body. Help me, Father, to use my gifts to Your honor and glory, and for the building up of Christ’s body, the Church.

Genesis 7:1-10, 17-23; Psalms 148, 149, 150; Mark 3:7-19

Monday, January 15

Birthdays: Suzanne Arnold

Prayers for: Guy & Sonji Williams; Danny & Debbie Winkler, Kaydence; John & Kathryn Zacharias, Matthew; John & Neale Ziebell; Ana Acosta

John 2:23—3:15 Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.” (vv.1-2)

We can only imagine the anxiousness that coursed through Nicodemus as he approached Jesus. What if he were seen by some others from the council? What if one of his enemies saw him with Jesus? This suggests that Nicodemus felt an overwhelming urge to see Jesus for himself. But he needs the cover of darkness to hide himself. What are the things that we use to hide ourselves from a real encounter with the Living Lord? Too busy? Fear? Interior dishonesty that keeps us from admitting our spiritual blindness? Whatever it may be, just as Jesus illumined Nicodemus and told him that he needed to be born anew—that is, to become a new person—so, too, can Jesus lead us into that newness of life where he is Lord of both the light and the dark. Father God, open my eyes to see Your hand at work in my life this very day.

Genesis 8:6-22; Psalm 25; Hebrews 4:14—5:6

Tuesday, January 16

Birthdays:

Prayers for: Ed & Carmelina Alvarez; Pat Alvis; Alice Amos Nwanguma; Diamond & Rowland Amos Nwanguma, Clinton, Brandon; Gwen Arora

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)

Is there any single verse of Scripture that is more familiar than this one? Hanging over the front wall at ball games, written on bumper stickers, imbedded in our hearts and minds, we love it because it sums up the whole of the Gospel in less than twenty-five words. Yet, because of the familiarity of this verse, we may often hurry over it and not do the “inward digesting” that is needed. What it tells us is of a God whose love is without bounds because it comes at so great a cost. And we are the beneficiaries of that love. Thus, it is with a wholehearted love that we should seek to live as those who believe in Him. Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief.

Genesis 9:1-17; Psalms 26, 28; Hebrews 5:7-14

Wednesday, January 17

Birthdays:

Prayers for: Shane & Jessica Anderson; Suzanne Arnold, Connor; Cody & Rachel Ault, Alex, Evelyn, Charlotte, Margaret; Wayne Ballentine

Hebrews 6:1-12 Therefore let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity... (v.1a)

Isn't that always a problem? Going on to maturity, I mean. We'd rather stick in the ranks of the amateurs than to join the pros at this game of life! But a beloved former bishop of mine used to say, “If, at the end of the year, you are no further along the road to spiritual growth than last year, you've not just stayed in one place, you've lost ground!” A great difficulty is that it seems almost impossible to measure growth toward maturity. Have we grown because we can pray ten minutes longer this year than last? Because we can fast two days instead of one? The world is full of such kinds of measures and we tend to bring them into our spiritual lives. But the real growth, growth that we can measure, is marked by our answer to questions like these: “Am I less likely to gossip this year than last?” “Do I have greater control of my passions?” “Am I a better witness to the Christ in me?” O Lord, you know my fear of growing up; help me to overcome it this day.

Genesis 9:18-29; Psalm 38; John 3:22-36

Thursday, January 18

Birthdays:

Prayers for: Fehintolu & Kehinde Babayemi, Bukunmi, Folawemi; Maria Del Carmen Bastard; Kyla Bayang, Vicki; Steve & Nanette Benoit

Genesis 11:1-9 The LORD said, “If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. 7 Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other.” (vv.6-7)

We live in an interesting time, don't we? When I read in the book of Revelation about a “Voice heard around the world,” which John the Divine—and everyone else throughout history until recently—could only imagine or see as hyperbole, I think of the cable news channels streaming into our homes. What was unimaginable is now commonplace. And the language? Ah, yes. There is a universal language and it is the English language, for that tongue is used by business, by the airlines, by ever so many people in all sorts of places like China and Russia and..., well, you get the idea. One can only speculate what it means to say that the world is fast becoming a global village. Will God confuse our tongues once more? Or are we being given an opportunity for evangelism on such a breath-taking scale that it is beyond our imaginations? Lord, in the noisy confusion of life, may we hear Your voice of love.

Psalm 37:1-18; Hebrews 6:13-20; John 4:1-15

Friday, January 19

Birthdays: Elizabeth Cavazos, Skylar Hager, Alberto Salazar

Prayers for: Preston & Carolyn Benson, Ella; Sue Benson; Ken & Patti Bill; Anne Birkhead; Ed & Zonia Bock; Jim & Dcn Kathy Boggs, Chris

Genesis 11:27—12:8 So Abram went, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. (v.4a)

Can you imagine coming home to your wife and saying, “Sarai, I was talking with God a while ago and He told us that we had to go away from here. He didn't exactly say where we were going to go, just that He'd tell us when we got there. Are you ready?” We can all say, “But things were different then.” That's true. The IRS didn't exist, no one had Social Security numbers and there was no electricity or telephone to shut off, let alone a newspaper to cancel. It was just fold up the tent and go! And off they went. There are, however, moments in the lives of us all that call for the same kind of decision. Sometimes it's a new job, an unexpected opportunity. I have just experienced such a thing— and it has been one of the great blessings of my entire ministry. We couldn't even find the place God was sending us on the map—and that's scary. But with no little anxiousness and trepidation, we set out—and have been thankful ever since. God can be trusted not to lead us astray. Lord, give us the courage to answer when You call us.

Psalm 31; Hebrews 7:1-17; John 4:16-26

Saturday, January 20

Birthdays: Nanette Radke

Prayers for: Ruby Bosh, JB; Bonnie Boyce; Carolyn Boyd; Frank Boyd; Nettie Briggs; Bob & Diann Brooke; Bruce & Jane Brough; David & Betsy Burns
John 4:27-42 They said to the woman, “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.” (v.42)

When my son was very small, he called light bulbs “hots.” We had told him that he was not to touch one because it was hot. He did. It was. And after the tears, they were all “hots.” He had learned experientially something that we really wanted him to learn in the easier manner. Now the Samaritans had heard about this Jesus. The woman told them about this “man who told me everything I ever did.” But now they have experienced him for themselves. How different it is to speak from one’s experience. Or to put it another way, there is a vast difference between knowing about Jesus and knowing Jesus. It is the latter that informs our better moments, converts our selfishness to selflessness, gives life to our souls. When we can join those Samaritans and say, “we know that this man really is the Savior of the world,” he becomes the Lord of our lives. Grant us, Lord, Your Spirit’s gift, that we may proclaim in our lives that Jesus is Lord.

Genesis 12:9—13:1; Psalms 30, 32; Hebrews 7:18-28

Sunday, January 21

Birthdays:

Prayers for: Erik & Mary Brown, Eli, Hayden, Jack; Eric & Lauren Burns, Jameson, Jack; Nita Burrer, Jason; Brian & Gail Cahill; Brian Callahan
Mark 7:31-37 Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone. But the more he did so, the more they kept talking about it. (v.36 NIV)

As difficult circumstances arrive one should obviously be in prayer and seek the Lord’s guidance. It is also helpful to have friends who will walk with you through difficult times. One area with which I have difficulty is finding those friends who will respect the confidentiality of what is being shared. Why is it that we as Christians cannot maintain confidentiality? It must be like the old story of knowing a secret—but is only worth it if we can tell someone. Maintaining confidentiality is the key ingredient in establishing deep, long lasting friendships and fellowships. If one is ever uncertain about what can be shared, then simply ask the person sharing the information. Anything shared with me stays with me. It was given or shared with me in confidence thus it is not my information to share. Even if married, I feel we should ask for clarity before sharing with a spouse. A truly trusted friend is a cherished and valuable asset. Keep the information confidential.

Genesis 13:2-18; Psalm 63; Galatians 2:1-10

Monday, January 22

Birthdays:

Prayers for: Bob & Mary Capps; Giselle Castillo; Dcn Jorge & Elizabeth Cavazos; Emile & Lynn Champion; Shelia Chandler; Jeff & Connie Chestnut
Genesis 14:1-24 But Abram said to the king of Sodom, “With raised hand I have sworn an oath to the Lord, God Most high, Creator of heaven and earth, that I will accept nothing belonging to you, not even a thread or the strap of a sandal, so that you will never be able to say, ‘I made Abram rich.’” (vv.22-23)

How good are we at keeping our promises? Is our oath an oath or just something to uphold when it is convenient? Abram was faithful in so many different ways. He was not going to let any circumstance change the commitment that he had made. As with the previous day’s writing, keeping your word is important in developing deep friendships. Temptations concerning money or material things tend to lead to bending the rules. Do you return the money found or consider it yours? If something is left behind is the thought that it was left for you, or do you try to find its owner? Growing and developing Christ-like characteristics require being faithful to sound principles—one of which should be keeping your promises or oath.

Psalms 41, 52; Hebrews 8:1-13; John 4:43-54

Tuesday, January 23

Birthdays: Fisoye Delano, Corinne Sandifer

Prayers for: Maureen Clairday; Byron & April Clark; Scott & Ashley Clarke, Chase, Trevor, Weston; Keith & Lisa Coe; Trey & Sherri Cowan, Cade
Hebrews 9:1-14 But when Christ came as high priest of the good things that are now already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with human hands, that is to say, it is not a part of this creation. He did enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. (vv.11-12)

Two things come to mind as I read this from Hebrews. I love how passages, writings, and stories of times before the coming of Christ all have an awareness of the second coming. Secondly, it reminds me that rituals and man’s thinking are not the ingredients for salvation. Eternal life with Christ is a gift which no man can earn. It is free and comes from the shedding of his blood for our new life. Christ came to build a new temple. You cannot earn your way to heaven or earn your way to salvation. It comes through an acknowledgement of wanting Jesus and asking him to be the center of your life. It is a free gift; accept it and start enjoying heaven on earth.

Genesis 15:1-11, 17-21; Psalm 45; John 5:1-18

Wednesday, January 24

Birthdays:

Prayers for: Gary & Delores Coward; Allan & Sue Cox; Caroline Craze; Mike & Kay Daigle, Paul, Peter, Kaylee; Bill & Caroline Davies

John 5:19-29 “Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgement to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.” (vv.22-23)

The concept of the Trinity is difficult to fathom. Here the Father makes it clear as to the purpose of His Son coming to earth in human form. Mankind had been separated from God because of our sin. Yet God offered His Son as a sacrifice to atone for our sins and to bring us into reconciliation with Him. This verse reminds me of the verse where Jesus reiterates that no one comes to the Father except through him. While some people want there to be multiple ways to gain salvation, it becomes very clear in numerous Scripture verses that this was not God’s intention. As you witness to friends and family, let us be reminded to focus on the ease of having a relationship with Jesus. Do you get upset when someone offering directions says just go across the bridge and you will find your destination? Will you not take the directions waiting for there to be multiple ways to get to your destination? God did not want His offer of salvation to be complicated. He offered His Son for our benefit. Accept this free gift and get into a relationship with Jesus.

Genesis 16:1-14; Psalms 119:49-72; Hebrews 9:15-28

Thursday, January 25

Birthdays: Fr. Oscar Gallego

Prayers for: Mary Karen Davis; Shane & Kristina Dear, Jacob, Lauren; Fisoye & Solape Delano; Cynthia Dennis; Deborah Denoble; Lisa DiBiasio

Psalm 50 “Consider this, you who forget God, or I will tear you to pieces, with no one to rescue you: Those who sacrifice thank offerings honor me, and to the blameless I will show my salvation.” (vv.22-23)

The world seems to be in chaos. As a nation we are divided, and justice is lacking or entirely missing in many instances. Road rage is common as a sign of man wanting there to be some form of punishment or justice. We are not to judge or to bring our own form of retribution. We sometimes only want to see the good side of God’s grace and want that perfectness to be present in all circumstances. I am reminded here that God is just, but it happens in His timeframe—not ours. While the gospel is a positive message for eternal life, we sometimes sugar coat it—as if all things are orderly without any consequences for man’s sins. Judgement day will come. It is not a pleasant thought for a nonbeliever, but our God is a just God and He will reign His justice when Jesus comes again. Cast your belief in Jesus and the burden of your sins will have been born through his sacrifice on the cross.

Genesis 16:15—17:14; Hebrews 10:1-10; John 5:30-47

Friday, January 26

Birthdays: Carolyne Digel, Fr. Stan Gerber

Prayers for: Mike & Carolyne Digel; Fr. Larry & Brenda DiSano; Tom Donley; Mark & Jennifer Doremus; Pat Doremus; Richard & Betty Dove

John 6:1-15 When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, “Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted.” So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten. (vv.12-13)

There have been numerous times in my life when I have felt stressed, full of worry, and uncertain how difficulties would work out. I am a worrier, and it is difficult for me to get out of the “funk.” What helps me to get back to a balanced perspective is reading stories like this one. While not all the solutions have been exactly what I prayed for, the solutions have come and demonstrate that no experience goes to waste. I marvel how little understood situations or circumstances come back into focus when I witness how God resolves my difficulties. And as Jesus did with the feeding of the 5,000, he provides more than what was expected. I have been reminded of a saying that asks, “Can you imagine that God might be preparing an answer for you that is bigger and better than you can imagine?” I want to have that kind of faith. Satan will try to get you focused on the problem and one’s urge for an immediate solution. Scripture reminds us to be prayerful, patient, and to give God a chance to work His plan.

Genesis 17:15-27; Psalms 40, 54; Hebrews 10:11-25

Saturday, January 27

Birthdays: Evelyn Ault, Mary Karen Davis

Prayers for: Mike Downs; Kathleen Ellis; Atris & Ayele Preston, Ayele, Allahyea; Grace England; Wade & Valerie Fennel; Barry Firestone

Psalm 55 Cast your cares on the LORD and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous be shaken. (v.22)

It seems fitting to end this week of writings with this psalm. Have you ever heard the saying “Pray last get nowhere fast”? When confronted with problems I normally go right into “solve” mode. Basically, I am looking for man’s answer to the problems rather than casting my cares on the Lord. A lack of patience is part of my problem but, as my spiritual life has “blossomed”, I am turning my cares over to the Lord and have been entering a time of prayer before immediately applying my solutions. I won’t say this has been an easy process. Thinking that I can solve every difficulty with my own thinking is foolhardy thinking. Our enemy wants us to believe we can solve everything ourselves or that turning to God is not an option. I also experience that the closer I get to God the more that Satan works to discourage me. When confronting unwelcome circumstances, try turning them over to Him first and then wait patiently to see His plan rather than ours. If we are called to action, He will make it obvious where and when we are to move.

Genesis 18:1-16; Hebrews 10:26-39; John 6:16-27

Sunday, January 28

Birthdays: Clayton Melanson

Prayers for: Kevin & Dena Fennell, Darcy, Kelsey, Rory, Danielle; Linda Flavin; Benjamin & Tey Flores; Silvia Flores; David & Linda Flower

Mark 8:22-30 Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, "Who do people say I am?" (v.27 NIV)

This is a good question for each of us to reflect on, and not just at the beginning of our journey with Jesus but periodically during our lives. Especially when we realize we have strayed from Christ's loving arms and direction. It is easier to simply repeat the description others give of Christ. But it is essential for our spiritual growth for each of us to know deep within our hearts who we believe Jesus is. To mimic another's response to this question is like memorizing algebra formulas without knowing how or when to apply those formulas. Then when we are tested, we don't know how to release the knowledge and power to accomplish the task. We must be honest with ourselves, if no one else, about who we believe Jesus is. It is only through our honesty that Jesus can more fully come into our lives. If your description of who Jesus is seems less fulfilling than another's description, rest assured that, if you are willing, Jesus will broaden and deepen your understanding.

Genesis 18:16-33; Psalms 24, 29; Galatians 5:13-25

Monday, January 29

Birthdays: Santos Aguilar, Amelia Masterson

Prayers for: Joyce Fontaine; John & Cecelia Gabrielson; Fr. Oscar & Alejandra Gallego, Santiago; Leobardo & Janeth Gallegos, Daniel, Jennifer

John 6:27-40 Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty." (v.35)

On occasion I hear someone say they believe in Jesus as Christ but, if only they could see "something" or hear "something" directly from God, then they would really believe that God exists. Yet, not everyone who met Jesus believed in him (v.36). Not even after seeing with their own eyes the miracles Jesus performed did they believe. So, seeing is not necessarily believing. Everyone has moments of doubt. But to stop and wait for proof will only delay one's awareness of God's existence all around us and within us. We are told in Hebrews 11:6 to seek God and that God will reward those who seek Him earnestly. Therefore, seek God with all your heart, not with only half of your heart. If we seek to believe more fully, our seeking will be rewarded. Jesus promises to satisfy our (spiritual) hunger and thirst, if we come to him and believe in him. It is our choice, as always. As we continue to believe in Jesus (and this is not just a one-time decision), our faith grows. And God helps us nurture that growth if we let Him. God will never punish us for the occasional doubt. He just wants us to continue in faith despite our occasional doubts.

Genesis 19:1-29; Psalms 56, 57, 58; John 6:27-40; Hebrews 11:1-12

Tuesday, January 30

Birthdays: Laura Duenez, Marian Mann, Hap Warren

Prayers for: David Gandin; Clay & Natasha Gardner; Phil & Susie Geaslen; Brandon & Candy Geer, Cathy; Jim Geer; Fr. Stan & Mary Gerber

John 6:41-51 "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day." (v.44)

God never stops trying to urge us back to Him. That is because He loves us so much. It is, however, up to us to choose to follow that urging and come to Christ for everlasting life. Coming to Christ is but the first step. For some of us, it is the hardest and most difficult step of all. Choosing to believe in Christ is not a one-time choice. We actually choose to believe each moment of each day. At any moment, we can choose to stop believing in and coming to Christ. God leaves that option open for us. God's urging also continues after our first step of accepting Christ into our lives. God then nudges us to draw ever closer to Him by reading, studying, and reflecting on His word. And He nudges us to open ourselves to Him in prayer. God wants us to know Him intimately. And He gently guides us and coaxes us each step of the way at a pace that will encourage us.

Genesis 21:1-21; Psalms 61, 62; Hebrew 11:13-22

Wednesday, January 31

Birthdays: Clay Gardner

Prayers for: Nick & Hillary Gerber, Elijah, Adalee, Jonah, Noah, Eden; Mar Giah; Nathaniel Giles, Gabriel; Juan & Alma Gonzales, Gabriela, Yanelly

John 6:52-59 "For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him." (vv.55-56)

Jesus is real, genuine, authentic. We can count on him to remain with us through hard times, easy times, and neutral times. All we need to do is allow Jesus into our life. And that means into every aspect of our lives, not just superficially. And as we allow Jesus this accessibility, his presence is assured. He will be there whether we call out to him or not. We were given to him by God and Jesus has no intention of losing any of us. This means he will do whatever it takes to sustain and nurture us in the same way God sustained and nurtured him. God never let Jesus down. Jesus will never let us down. Most of us tend to be wary folks. So, at first, we can only allow Jesus into our lives in a small, experimental way. God understands this even better than we do. But He can make the best of any situation and, as we open ourselves to Him through Jesus, we become gradually more like Jesus. We begin to experience the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23a), and then we become instruments to share them.

Genesis 22:1-18; Psalm 72; Hebrew 11:23-31