



NORTHMINSTER DAILY DEVOTIONS

VOL. 36, NO. 7

July 1-31, 2009

Northminster Devotionals

May these devotionals be a blessing to you as we are guided through the daily Scripture readings from *Daily Lectionary*.

This resource has come to you because people from NPC have offered their gifts, to be a blessing to the entire Northminster community, to Tucson and beyond.

If you would like to use your God-given talent to become a part of the devotional writing team, call the church at 520-327-7121 and talk to Publications Editor, Jim Peck. This is a very flexible ministry and can be done from anywhere!

The next issue of the Northminster Daily Devotions will be available on Sunday, July 26, 2009.

Cover image: church in Schladming, Austria.

The grey boxes that appear on every page direct you to pray for a particular church, organization or group each day. These come from the Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study, which are available in the Church Office.

Tools of the Trade

by Dale McArthur

Praise awaits you, O God, in Zion; to you our vows will be fulfilled. O you who hear prayer, to you all men will come. -Psalm 65:1-2

It was a large, stone, three-story church with balcony and many church school class rooms. It had ample space around it with a parking lot. It could easily have had more than one full-time custodian but this congregation of 600+ had employed one man of challenged mental gifts.

It became apparent to me that this custodian had too many supervisors and critics for a person to have a normal, happy life. I decided that whenever I saw him I would praise him for some piece of work he had accomplished. I'm sure it made his life just a bit more pleasant.

All jobs come to a conclusion and we move on to the next one and there usually are cards and letters that follow wishing good luck on our next adventure. In the stack that we received was a child like card that merely said, "Thank you for all you did for me." It made me realize that all that I did for him was to praise him for his work and say "thank you" for a job well done.

Christians need tools in assisting others to find Christ. The bag of tools include the use of "praise and thank you" as it helps build others into something just a little better and it identifies us as Christians.

These tools of the trade are known as Evangelism tools. Living in a townhome I still have a shovel, rake and hoe standing in the corner of the garage. After four years of no use, they are rusty and appear ready to be disposed of. So it can be with the evangelism tools in our Christian bag of tools. Lack of use can make our lives rusty and ineffective. The tools of the trade can just be simple - praise and thank you.

Praise comes from God—Pass it on.

Youth: Do you have a friend that needs encouragement? Use the tools of praise and thanksgiving.

Adults: A home filled with tools of evangelism is a home we look forward to - how is yours?

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the tools of love we can use to help others. Allow us to keep them effective. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

Serbian Orthodox Church

Reformed Church in Yugoslavia

THURSDAY, JULY 2 LECTONARY READINGS

Psalm 143:1-12

1 Samuel 13:5-18

Acts 8:26-40

Luke 23:13-25

Psalm 81:1-16

Teach Me

by Jennifer Hager

Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground. -Psalm 143:10

I have the very good fortune to be a part time instructor in business at several southern Arizona universities. The pleasure the Lord gives me in this endeavor is boundless. I have the opportunity to see students grow and mature not only in the subject matter, but also in their comprehension and communication skills. And of course, I have learned so much about the practice of marketing from facilitating the courses and from the students. I am able to use many good ideas developed in one class to instruct in the next.

In this Psalm, David asks the Holy Spirit to teach him in God's ways and in God's will and purpose for him. The old adage is that when the student is ready, the teacher will appear. David is sure of God's desire to teach him and actively seeks it. We must be willing to learn and to grow in Christ. The Bible, worship and praise and small groups will reveal God's teaching to us. But we should be willing to learn.

Youth: How are you learning about God?

Adults: Do you seek the Lord's teaching through all the tools he has given us?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Almighty God, thank you for using me to teach others. Please open our hearts to your instruction and use us to tell others of your love. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

Greek Evangelical Church

Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania

Tell Me How You Really Feel

by Jennifer Monroe

O Lord, the God who saves me, day and night I cry out before you. May my prayer come before you; turn your ear to my cry. -Psalm 88:1-2

Now, listen up! Listen up, all of you who've been knocked down, beaten up, pushed around, and picked on. Pay attention, everyone who's ever been lonely, lost, or laid low. This is for you, you wasted, worn, and weary, you burnt out, burnt up and burnt down. This is for the victimized, terrorized, hunted, harried, and harassed. Ever been frustrated, aggravated, irritated or obfuscated? Ever been snubbed or spited? Wronged and not righted? Belittled and benighted? If you've ever felt your hope draining, seen the sunlight fading, and known your strength was failing, then Psalm 88 is for you.

If you opened your Bible to this morning's Psalm, hoping for some nice, encouraging words or beautiful imagery to start your day, then you were sadly disappointed. Psalm 88 consists of eighteen torturous verses of lament, and is remarkable in the Psalter for the fact that not one verse contains anything that might be construed as hopeful or positive. The author is obviously in a lot of trouble and does not see any sign that God is about to rescue him any time soon. It is not for lack of praying that the psalmist is in distress; he has been crying out "day and night," and yet all he hears from God is a resounding silence. It's easy to sense the author's barely-contained fury, and in my mind's ear I hear them accompanied by the crashing dissonant chords of an angry rock song.

I am so thankful that this particular song was included in the Psalms, because it reminds me that this too is a legitimate part of our Christian experience. There are moments in our lives when we feel completely alone, near to death, maybe even abused and forgotten by God. Rather than simply ignoring those feelings or pretending like "good Christians" don't have them, it might be better to go ahead and let them out, telling God exactly what we think and how we feel. I doubt that God wants us to pretend like everything is honky-dory, when both he and we know that's not true. He is big enough to take our rants, even our doubts and fears. So go ahead: tell him how you *really* feel.

Youth: Read the first paragraph again. Can you identify with any of the descriptive words used there? Which ones?

Adults: Do you ever hesitate to express your real feelings to God? Why?

Prayer: Lord God, we know that you are big enough to take all our doubts and fears, all our anger and frustration. Remind us that you will not forsake us, no matter what our feelings say. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

The Synod of the Mid-Atlantic

SATURDAY, JULY 4 LECTONARY READINGS

Psalm 122:1-9

1 Samuel 14:16-30

Acts 9:10-19a

Luke 23:32-43

Psalm 100:1-5

On the Road to Damascus

by John McKee

On the road to Damascus,

Around noon one day,

As Saul was enroute to that town

To return Christians to Jerusalem...

There to be punished

(His cruelty at that time was renown)...

He fell blinded to the ground

When he was bathed in a Light

So brilliant that he could not see

And he heard a voice saying,

“Saul, Saul,

“Why do you persecute me?”

The voice was from Jesus,

Speaking only to him,

A voice those with Saul could not hear.

Saul was terribly frightened...

He was blinded and shaking...

His heart filled with sudden fear.

“What shall I do, Lord?”

Saul said to the light.

Jesus told him to continue on.

In Damascus he'd be directed

As to what he should do

And suddenly the bright Light was gone.

He was led by the hand

By those who were with him

Still blinded from the brilliant white light.

They were met in Damascus

By Ananias who said,

“Brother Saul, receive your sight!”

That very hour

He could see once again

And Ananias to Saul explained

That he was to bear witness

To the Lord Jesus Christ.

The same Savior whom he had once pained.

He was baptized at that time.

His sins washed away.

His soul that very day was saved.

We are grateful, dear Lord,

For those early Christians

And your road to salvation they paved.

Let us join in prayer for:

Abington Presbytery (Virginia)

SUNDAY, JULY 5 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalm 108:1-13 1 Samuel 14:36-45 Romans 5:1-11 Matthew 22:1-4 Psalm 66:1-20

A God of Love

by John McKee

The fear of the Lord
Is the beginning of wisdom,
According to Proverbs 9:10.

And it's prudent to fear him
Who has the power
To condemn you to Hell for your sin.

Old Testament Prophets
Wrote of God's anger
And his wrath that evoked such great fear;

But he's slow to anger
And he's quick to forgive
All sinners who to him draw near.

His love toward us
Is immeasurably deep.
It's a constant upon which to depend

When life appears hopeless
And you're down on your luck,
He's there for you like a good friend.

So thank him each day
For the love he bestows
Heap praises upon his holy name,

For his fatherly love
In years past, today,
And the future remains just the same.

Let us join in prayer for:

McCormick Theological Seminary (Illinois)

MONDAY, JULY 6 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalm 62:1-12 1 Samuel 15:1-3,7-23 Acts 9:19b-31 Luke 23:44-56a Psalm 73:1-28

Strength With Love

by Anne Price

One thing God has spoken, two things have I heard: that you, O God, are strong, and that you, O Lord, are loving. Surely you will reward each person according to what he has done. -Psalm 62:11-12

As I read this verse, the attributes of God that stood out are to be strong and love others. As of this writing, the news is filled with the warnings of the swine flu. As we wait for the medical community to get this under control I think, what can we as individuals do?

Back in 1918, my grandmother, whose husband was in France fighting for our country, got the flu that killed thousands around the world while she was nursing others. She had 3 small children to live for, a strong belief in God, and did everything possible to keep up her strength. As she got better she went on to help others who were sick and had husbands in The War. God rewarded her by sending home her husband at the end of the war safely. They went on to have another child and 12 grandchildren.

I saw love and strength in action from my grandparents. Now that I look back on my life, being raised by them I see that my Christian grandmother taught me the love of Jesus and unconditional love. My grandfather, the Colonel showed me how to be strong no matter what happened in my life. My grandfather's handwritten journal from the Front told of praying every day for his family and the men in his unit.

Together they left a legacy that I am to pass on. Our healing in life is strengthened as we reach out lovingly to others.

Youth: When do you feel strong? Do you feel better when you show love to another?

Adults: Do you remember the times when you were not well that you prayed for strength and God sent it?

Prayer: O God, may you be with all of your people from all nations with the strength that only you can give. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

Atlantic-Korean-American Presbytery

TUESDAY, JULY 7 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalm 12:1-8

1 Samuel 15:24-35

Acts 9:32-43

Luke 23:56b-24:11

Psalm 36:1-12

Health ... and More

by Dick Leon

There he found a man named Aeneas, a paralytic who had been bedridden for eight years. "Aeneas," Peter said to him, "Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and take care of your mat." Immediately Aeneas got up. All those who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord. -Acts 9:33-35

Health matters. When we are hurting from an illness or accident we are not in a good mood. When we ask for prayers in church invariably the requests are for people who need healing; this shows how much health means to all of us. Our health matters to the Lord, also. Jesus healed people. He didn't heal everyone, however, so there is considerable mystery around his healings!

Here is my question: Are we in danger of reducing God to just another member of our healing-care-delivery team?

There is nothing wrong with praying for healing, but our prayers should always go far beyond that to the larger concerns of our Lord: such as peace, justice, and having a good witness to the world.

Today's text tells us that Peter (representing the early church) continues to deploy the healing gift that Jesus brought to the world. Jesus is the Healer, and Peter is the one to claim healing. But there is a larger call in our text: the call to discipleship that overshadows our healing and delivers an even larger kind of 'wellness' - the wellness of being a follower of Jesus Christ.

Youth: When you are sick or injured, do you pray for God's healing?

Adults: How many of your prayers are for healing and how many are for the advancement of the Kingdom of God in this world?

Prayer: Gracious Lord, you are a great source of health to us all. Help us to be grateful for your healing power but even more to be faithful to your call to serve you in this world in both sickness and in health. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

The Presbytery of Baltimore (Maryland)

WEDNESDAY, JULY 8 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalm 96:1-13

1 Samuel 16:1-13

Acts 10:1-16

Luke 24:13-35

Psalm 132:1-18

God Knows Your Heart

by Judy Williams

But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

-1 Samuel 16:7

In Old Testament history, we know that after God rejected Saul as King of the Jews, he told Samuel to anoint a new king over the people. Samuel was instructed to go to Jesse's house to find the person that God had chosen. As each of Jesse's stronger, taller, older sons were called before Samuel, God rejected each one. But when at last young David was summoned from tending the sheep, God knew that David's heart was right for the tasks that lay ahead. "So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers and from that day on the Spirit of the Lord came upon David in power."

We know from recorded history that the Holy Spirit had indeed given David power to do great things. When the soldiers (including his own brothers) were afraid to face the huge enemy, Goliath, it was young David who took the small stones and killed the giant to save his people.

Later we read of Saul's jealousy, and of his intention to have David killed.

As David ran for his life and hid in the wilderness, he trusted God to save him and bring him to his rightful throne.

While David was certainly not perfect, he did have God's leading and protection throughout his life. Though just a boy when he was called to serve, he never forgot God's faithfulness.

Youth: Even though you are a young person, do you realize that God knows what is in your heart and can use you to serve his Kingdom?

Can you accept the fact that looks are not important to God...only what is in your heart?

Adults: Today will you strive to understand the character of the people you meet rather than looking only at their outward appearance?

Prayer: Dear Father, help me today to focus on improving my inner character and spend less time improving only my surface appearance. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

The Presbytery of Charlotte (North Carolina)

THURSDAY, JULY 9 LECTONARY READINGS

Psalm 116:1-19

1 Samuel 16:14-17:11

Acts 10:17-33

Luke 24:36-53

Psalm 26:1-22

Staying Centered

by Karen Foss

Vindicate me, O LORD, for I have led a blameless life; I have trusted in the LORD without wavering. Test me, O LORD, and try me, examine my heart and my mind; for your love is ever before me, and I walk continually in your truth. I do not sit with deceitful men, nor do I consort with hypocrites; I abhor the assembly of evildoers and refuse to sit with the wicked. I wash my hands in innocence, and go about your altar, O LORD, proclaiming aloud your praise and telling of all your wonderful deeds. -Psalm 26:1-7

The first thing I thought of when I read this passage is "Thank God for Grace". I am so not like David! David is not proclaiming that he never sinned. But he WAS in constant fellowship with God and always asked for forgiveness when he did sin. Don't get me wrong. I try to lead the kind of life God wants me to lead but fall far short many days. Too often, I revert to my old way of thinking that I have complete control of my life. I let worry creep in and forget to trust in what God has in store for me. I get busy and forget to give God the praise he deserves.

This is why I am a firm believer of regularly attending church and being involved with a good bible study group. It keeps me centered and reminds me to praise the Lord for his blessings. Jesus tells us to not isolate ourselves with other Christians, but to be a witness to non-believers as well. I try to do this, but know that I feel so grounded in God's love when I'm with my church family.

Youth: Who do you hang out with? Do they influence you or do you, as a Christian influence them?

Adults: Do you get distracted by everyday life? What keeps you centered?

Prayer: Father, I thank you for placing me in a good church family. Help me be a blessing to those around me. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

The Presbytery of Coastal Carolina (North Carolina)

You Are a Few of His Favorite Things

by Jennifer Monroe

Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right." -Acts 10:34-35

I love guacamole. I make my own special version of the spicy Mexican dip, peeling and mashing perfectly ripe avocados, and then adding a squeeze of lemon, a shake of garlic salt, and a good smattering of chopped roasted green chiles and red tomatoes. Once I've finished my creation, I have to "test" some, just to make sure the balance of ingredients is right, and once I've started "testing," I find it difficult to stop. In my life, I've met quite a few people who share my fondness for this special appetizer, and, fantastically, a handful who don't. What is to me a bowl full of creamy, spicy, tangy goodness, to them it is nothing but inedible green goop.

As humans, it's natural for us to have "favorites" and maybe even to think that everyone needs to share our opinions on those favorites. Not only do we have favorite foods and favorite music, but we can also have favorite people, and it's tempting for us to treat our favorites with special honor, while we can easily disregard those for whom we don't feel any special affection. Remarkably, as we discover in Acts, God does not show favoritism. This hasn't always been the case. Up until Jesus arrived on the scene, Israel had been God's favorite, his "chosen people." But Peter's sermon in Acts 10 makes it clear that now not only are the Jews God's chosen people, but Gentiles are as well. This was such a foreign idea for Jesus' early followers that it was hard for many of them to accept. Luke says they were "astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles" (10:45). It's difficult for us to understand what an incredible change this represented for first century Jewish Christians, and yet Peter and Paul and the other apostles are adamant: the Gospel is not only for Jews, but *also* for the "unclean" Gentiles. We are all God's favorites now and therefore have the honor of treating every person we meet as a treasured possession of God, whether they are our favorite or not.

Youth: Do you have a favorite friend? Why do you like him or her? Do you treat him or her differently? What would it be like if you treated everyone this way?

Adults: Do you struggle with showing favoritism to one person or kind of people?

Prayer: Jesus, thank you that you love each of us passionately, deeply, and equally. Give us the eyes to see every person the way you do. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

The Presbytery of Eastern Virginia

SATURDAY, JULY 11 LECTONARY READINGS

Psalms 63:1

1 Samuel 17:31-49

Acts 11:1-18

Mark 1:14-28

Psalms 125:1-15

The Officer Fisherman

by Dale McArthur

“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you fishers of men.” At once they left their nets and followed him. -Mark 1:17-18

The Scripture does not spell out the specific qualities of character and/or skills these men had, except they were “fishermen.” Jesus could see deep into the soul of people and know about them and what their potential was.

The people Jesus chose to follow him were there for a given reason—only Jesus knew.

We were assigned to build a new church in a small but growing town. Living in that town was a retired army officer of high rank. After being in worship a few Sundays he felt God calling him and he could see the vision of how a new church would benefit our community. He became one of our leaders in the new church.

He, too, was a fisherman and owned a nice boat. We spent many a morning getting hooks wet and sharing stories about life and experiences. (Some of the fishing stories were true.)

As time passed when I needed a leader to move a project from conception to completion, there was our officer fisherman ready to take on the project, recruit workers and move it to completion.

Wouldn't it be interesting to know what part of Jesus' earthly plans he had when recruiting each of the disciples? He said “Come, follow me” not being specific, but the disciples followed. If Jesus had spelled out the part of his ministry that included Calvary Hill, would the disciples have dropped their nets so readily?

Jesus calls each one of us but does not spell out the road we'll travel together. He just sees our potential for leadership and servant-hood.

Youth: When you join a team, are you certain what position you will play? Does the coach challenge your plans?

Adults: Jesus is the ultimate CEO of our families. Can we be accepting of our plans and goals?

Prayer: Thank you, Lord, for being the director of our lives and the planner of eternity. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

The Presbytery of the James (Virginia)

SUNDAY, JULY 12 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalm 103:1-22 1 Samuel 17:50-18:4 Romans 10:4-17 Matthew 23:29-39 Psalm 117:1-2

Mighty David

by John McKee

As a young shepherd boy
Tending his father's sheep...
To keep ravenous animals at bay...

David grew very adept
At the use of his sling
To prevent them from reaching their prey.

Although small of stature,
He showed a great deal of courage...
His Psalms also reveal a keen mind.

The lad was musically gifted
In both lyre and song...
With a heart very tender and kind.

God had a plan for his life
From the very beginning...
As He does for us *all* before birth.

The Psalmist, David, loved God...
For all the blessings bestowed
By the Maker of Heaven and earth.

God led Samuel, his Prophet,
To Jesse's eight sons
To anoint David, the youngest of all.

And when the king was tormented
They brought David before him
For his music soothed the heart of King Saul.

One day the Philistine armies
Had gathered for battle...
Challenging the men of Israel to fight.

Their champion, Goliath,
Came out to taunt them
Both at dawn and also early each night.

For forty days Goliath bellowed
To send to him their best man
The vanquished would be enslaved.

The frightened people of Israel
Had no one who could best him...
And they cowered as he ranted and raved.

Leaving the sheep with a keeper,
Jesse sent his son, David,
With food for his three hungry brothers...

When he heard Goliath's threat
David volunteered to fight him...
For he didn't fear him as did the others.

Selecting stones from a brook
He advanced on the warrior...
His first stone struck Goliath dead

David then picked up the sword
The slain giant had dropped
And severed the Philistine's head.

Let us join in prayer for:

Church wide Gathering of Presbyterian Women

MONDAY, JULY 13 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalm 5:1-12

1 Samuel 18:5-16

Acts 11:19-30

Mark 1:29-45

Psalm 82:1-8

My Shield

by Jennifer Hager

For surely, O LORD, you bless the righteous; you surround them with your favor as with a shield. -Psalm 5:12

The Old Testament is filled with stories about God's people in the midst of physical conflict. Chapter after chapter tell of the Israelites in pursuit of an enemy, being pursued by enemies and thousands being slain in the battle.

The Psalmist here is offering thanksgiving to the Lord for his protection. It might be easy for us to think, "Well, no wonder, the psalmist is thankful, he must have survived the latest battle." We seldom have occasion to wage physical battle with our enemies. We should thank God every day for his protection from physical attack.

But what about spiritual attacks? The enemies of God attack us every day with temptations of the world, with hurtful lies, with disdain and distress. The good news is that God protects us with his favors like a shield from these attacks. We should turn to him in thanksgiving and prayer and acknowledge his all present and all powerful protection.

When the enemy seems too great, remember God's shield. Christ gives us his protection freely and abundantly.

Youth: Turn to the Lord in prayer when you are worried or afraid. He will protect you.

Adults: Our Almighty God will protect us from all evil. Turn to him with your worries and fears and ask for him to guide you.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Almighty God, thank you for keeping us safe. We ask you to give us the heart to turn to you and acknowledge your love and protection. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

National Capital Presbytery (Metropolitan Washington, DC)

TUESDAY, JULY 14 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalms 42:1-11

1 Samuel 19:1-24

Acts 12:1-17

Mark 2:1-12

Psalms 102:1-28

Need Direction?

by Marie Ruiz

Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. "Quick, get up!" he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrists. -Acts 12:7

As I sit in my office writing this devotional for today I'm reminded of God's power in all situations. In my personal situation, I'm watching the news very closely as the H1N1 (Swine flu) virus is the focus of our news at every broadcast along with warnings not to travel to Mexico. That is exactly where I'm supposed to travel with the mission team in twenty three days. Our work is planned in a little Mayan village deep within the heart of the Yucatan and it is something many people have prayerfully planned, given sacrificially and worked toward over the past year. My task now is to wait on the Lord. I'm to be mindful that His will is higher than ours. I will pray and wait on Him for direction.

In the Acts passage we see God at work in a mighty way. He sent an angel to Peter in prison who was chained between two soldiers. I'm sure Peter had no hope of getting out of this one. But God's might and miraculous power through the angel God sent freed Peter of his chains telling Peter to follow him past the guards and out into the street where Peter headed for home.

We can never doubt God's power in any situation. Like Peter, let's be confident in the power of God: "Now I know without a doubt that the Lord sent his angel and rescued me from Herod's clutches and from everything the Jewish people were anticipating." (v11)

Youth: The Bible is full of miracles and how they affected people's lives. Do you believe in miracles?

Adults: Nothing is impossible with God! Are you in a situation where you don't see a way out? Ask God for clear direction. He's just waiting to be asked.

Prayer: Holy Father, we are reminded in your Word of your awesome power in all situations. Help us cling to the hope that you are working out every detail in our life. Thank you. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

New Castle Presbytery (Delaware and Maryland)

The Greatest Physician

by Cheryl Moore

On hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." -Mark 2:17

How many times have we gone to the doctor and really did not need to? (Notice I said "we") You might have had the sniffles or a simple headache and could have taken an over-the-counter remedy and slept it off. But sometimes, seeing a physician (especially one we know well and trust) can help us feel better mentally and emotionally as well.

We may think "Things are pretty good in my life right now. I don't need to bother God". But, Oh! How we are missing out! Note that Jesus said he "came not to call the righteous". I don't know about you... I strive to be righteous but every day it happens; sin and trouble creeps its way into my life and I have to call on the "Great Physician" for healing grace.

Even if I have had a pretty good day without much complication, it always makes me feel better just to talk with the Physician I know and trust with my eternal life. Psalm 1:2 tells us that blessed is the man when "...his delight is in the law of Jehovah; And on his law doth he meditate day and night."

Remember that bumper sticker "Is Jesus your steering wheel, or spare tire?" That one made me think!

Bottom line is... We always need God! Happy, sad, angry, excited... it doesn't matter! Jesus called for us; let's remember to call for him every day!

Youth: Do you pray even when you are happy? Do you remember to give thanks to God for the good things in your life?

Adults: The next time you feel extremely happy; make an effort to include Jesus in your joy!

Prayer: Father, we know it's easy to call on you when we are desperate and in need, help us to remember you in our joy, giving you the thanks and glory! In Jesus' name. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

The Presbytery of New Hope (North Carolina)

THURSDAY, JULY 16 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalm 97:1-12

1 Samuel 20:24-42

Acts 13:13-25

Mark 2:23-3:6

Psalm 16:1-11

What is the Condition of Your Heart

by Jerry Smith

Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Stand up in front of everyone." Then Jesus asked them, "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they remained silent. He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus. -Mark.3:3-6

Let me propose some reflective questions;

1. If a man with a withered hand approached our pulpit after a Sunday service and asked for prayer what would our response be? Oh we don't do that here. Or would the congregation join with the pastor and pray for him, expecting Jesus to heal on the Sabbath?
2. If Northminster decided to have regular healing services would you be thrilled or would you start looking for a new church?
3. How do you look upon your brothers and sisters that have gifts of the Holy Spirit that you don't have?

Youth: Do you feel Jesus was justified in his anger?

Adults: What kind of a grade do you think Jesus would give the hearts of the Northminster congregation?

Prayer: Jesus we pray that that law that you placed in our minds and written on hearts (Hebrews 8:10) will give us the faith to believe in your promises. In your precious name we pray. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

The Presbytery of the Peaks (Virginia)

A Sinner's Prayer

by John McKee

O Lord, help me, a sinner,
To obey your will always...
Guide my feet onto your righteous path.

I pray that all of my actions
Will be pleasing in your sight...
So that I'll not incur my God's wrath.

Thank you, Lord, for those times
I am with you in prayer...
For those times we commune all alone...

I thank you for transforming
All my sorrows to joy...
And for enabling me to atone.

You're so gracious to me, Lord,
To grant my needs and desires...
Although at times your answer to me is... no.

Help me then to be content, Lord,
With your unerring guidance
In leading me in the way I'm to go.

Should I backslide in faith...
And begin falling away...
I pray, Lord, return me to your fold,

For one day in your presence
Is worth much more to me
Than all of King Solomon's gold.

Let us join in prayer for:

Salem Presbytery (North Carolina)

In Unity There is Strength

by Judy Williams

If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. -Mark 3:24-25

In today's passage, the Jewish leaders were confronting Jesus and accusing him of blasphemy. While he was teaching his message of love, he was misunderstood and was being accused of being possessed by the devil.

This parable of the divided kingdom is applicable to us in 2009. Think about our country, our state, our city, our church and our own homes. Of course, each of us is uniquely created by God and our varied circumstances influence our opinions and ideas.

"One country under God, indivisible..." is the ideal to which Americans strive, but divisions arise daily. Our Apostles' Creed states what all true Christians believe, but the differences among (and even within) various denominations can cause great debate. And when we focus on our own homes, Peterson in *The Message* states, "A constantly squabbling family disintegrates."

To rise above petty differences and seek a common purpose of fulfilling the life Jesus set out for us in the Sermon on the Mount should be a goal for each of us to renew today.

Please reread the Beatitudes found in the fifth chapter of Matthew, verses 1-12.

If we can attain the attributes taught in this great lesson, we should be able to find the strength we seek to become more nearly united in our purpose.

Youth: When there are disagreements among classmates, how can you be a peacemaker? Has anyone ever teased you because of your belief in Jesus as the Son of God? What can you do if that happens?

Adults: What have you done to help bring about unity in your neighborhood, your church, and your home? How can you take steps to bring our leaders together in unity of purpose?

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, We come to you today asking for the ability to make a real difference in the world around us. Give us grace for being peacemakers while at the same time standing up for you and for your kingdom. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

The Presbytery of Shenandoah (Virginia and West Virginia)

SUNDAY, JULY 19 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalm 19:1-14 1 Samuel 23:7-18 Romans 11:33-12:2 Matthew 25:14-30 Psalm 81:1-16

Have No Fear

by John McKee

God commands, "***Have no fear***"
For he'll always be near
To see us safely through life's every storm.

He's our sword and our shield
From whom nothing's concealed...
He alone keeps us secure from harm.

Believers down through the ages
Remained calm and courageous
Even when circumstances looked grim.

They knew God would take heed
And help them in their need
When they offered their prayers unto him.

Frightened Disciples reflected
As they hid undetected
Behind locked doors inside a small room.

When Jesus suddenly appeared
In their midst they all feared
They were seeing a ghost from the tomb.

With their eyes opened wide
They viewed his hands and side...
As well as the wounds on his feet.

When they gave him a dish
And he ate broiled fish
Their recognition of him was complete.

What would you and I do
If Jesus popped into view...
If He were suddenly to pay us a visit?

Would we have knocking knees...
Shake like leaves upon trees?
That scenario isn't too far-fetched...is it?

Time and again we are told
Christians are to be bold...
There's no reason for us ever to fear.

Keep the faith to the end
For he soon will descend...
Any day now, *Jesus shall* reappear.

Let us join in prayer for:

Small Church Ministry

What is Your Task?

by Frank Shallenberger

For this is what the Lord has commanded us: "I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth." -Acts 13:47

The Jews had rejected Paul's preaching to them. He then informed them that since they had rejected the message from God, he was directed by the Lord himself to preach to the Gentiles. A lot of us think that Paul was probably one of the few people who ever had a mission. God has a mission, a task to perform, for each and every one of us. Sometimes we don't like the task. We will try to run away from it just as Jonah did. But that doesn't make that mission go away. When God assigns a task for us he means for us to complete it.

How does God assign these tasks? God spoke personally to Paul and he may have to you, but that is very rare. Most of us are assigned our tasks when we ask Jesus into our lives and join a church. There are so many tasks to perform in the church and someone is going to ask you to undertake a task. It may be teaching Sunday School, it may be singing in the choir, it may be cleaning up the church grounds, parking cars; there is so much to be done in a church. When you are asked to perform a particular task remember that God will not ask you to do something you are incapable of doing. He expects you to exert yourself in order to accomplish your task.

Youth: When mother or dad asks you to do something at home, do you do it with pleasure knowing how much they do for you every day?

Adults: Have you been asked to perform a task in the community or in the church which you rejected? Did you realize that is how God speaks to you today?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we know that you have assigned a task for each one of us. Help us to understand that when we are called upon, it is really you who is speaking to us through the person who makes the request. This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

The Presbytery of Western North Carolina

Our Own CSI Work!

by Dick Leon

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands... The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes. -Psalm 19:1,7-8

CSI is one of America's most popular TV shows. (After "American Idol" of course!) Modern sleuths comb the smallest fragments of life to discover the bad guy in every Crime Scene Investigation. I'd like to propose that all of us need to do a similar diligent search of our Creation Scene Investigation in order to discover who or what is behind it all.

We all have friends like my friend, Bob, who says he doesn't need church to find God. He only needs to walk in the park or watch the sunset to know there is a God and to give God thanks. And there is enough truth in this line to touch us all!

Theologians (bless their hearts!) speak of two avenues of the knowledge of God. One is "Natural Revelation" and the other is "Special Revelation." Both are found in Psalm 19. The first refers to Nature and reminds us that there are infinite evidences of our Creator God all around us! If we were good detectives we would observe the natural world around us and conclude that "God left his fingerprints all over the place!"

But Nature is not always uniform. Besides sunsets and waterfalls there are also tsunamis, white sharks and mosquitoes. What do those anomalies of nature tell us about God? Don't we need some help beyond Nature to understand our Creator?

Yep, we do! And God has gone the second mile (much more actually!) to add to Nature the Written Record of his Law and Grace for us all. Scripture records for us more about our Creator God than Nature could ever uncover. This 'Special Revelation' tells us that the God who made us came to save us because he loves us!

Youth: When did you last feel stunned by the beauty and power of something in nature?

Adults: What wonders of nature convey God's glory to you?

Prayer: Mighty God, thank you for leaving your fingerprints all over this remarkable universe in which we are so blessed to be living. Stun us with all its wonders and then lead us to worship the God of Nature rather than Nature itself! We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

General Assembly Council

Did God Send Someone to You Today?

by Frank Shallenberger

David said to Abigail, "Praise be to the LORD, the God of Israel, who has sent you today to meet me." -1 Samuel 25:32

As I was reading through the Scripture verses for this day I came upon this line during the meeting David had with Abigail. David praised the Lord because he had sent Abigail to him. I know that God sends people to you and me as well. People with whom we oftentimes don't do what David did with Abigail—listen. Because David listened, many lives were spared and much bloodshed was avoided. Nothing that dramatic will ever happen to you and me in a relationship that God has set up for us. We frequently have opportunities to give our testimony and to lay the foundation for leading someone to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

This may be the telephone man, a street vendor, one of our neighbors, a fellow worker—we have no way of knowing. Sometimes it is someone whom we thought had a relationship with Jesus but who really didn't. The big job for us is to recognize the gift God has given us, secondly to listen, and last to present our testimony in a simple fashion. If you have the feeling that they are ready, lead them in a prayer for salvation. Make your prayer a part of yourself, expressing your personal feelings as you lead him/her to salvation.

Youth: Do you know how to give your testimony? If not, ask one of your teachers in Sunday School to teach you how.

Adults: Are you able to recognize people in need that the Lord has sent you? When you do, have you taken the opportunity to listen and to lead?

Prayer: Most Holy and Gracious Father, we your children come to you to seek the wisdom we need to recognize those unsaved individuals whom you send to us. Help us to listen and to lead in a gracious and loving manner—nothing judgmental or harsh. Oh Father, would that we might lead an unsaved soul to eternal salvation! This we ask in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

Office of the General Assembly and Board of Pensions

The Penalty for Not Obeying God

by Jerry Smith

Samuel said to Saul, "Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?" "I am in great distress," Saul said. "The Philistines are fighting against me, and God has turned away from me. He no longer answers me, either by prophets or by dreams. So I have called on you to tell me what to do." Samuel said, "Why do you consult me, now that the LORD has turned away from you and become your enemy? The LORD has done what he predicted through me. The LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hands and given it to one of your neighbors—to David. Because you did not obey the LORD or carry out his fierce wrath against the Amalekites, the LORD has done this to you today. The LORD will hand over both Israel and you to the Philistines, and tomorrow you and your sons will be with me." -1 Sam 28:15-19a

Most of us would much rather devote our devotionals to expound upon the love of God. However, we should never lose sight of the fact that he is also a just God and must punish sin that has not been turned over to Jesus Christ for forgiveness. To fully understand why Saul was punished you should start with 1 Samuel chapters 15 through 31. A very sad story. Let's examine a couple of key points:

1. The Israelites' first mistake was insisting on a king ruling over them. God wanted to be their King and he would appoint Judges to settle their disputes. Our country was founded on Christian, Judaic and democratic principles. Not perfect but not bad for human endeavors as long as we remember that there is only one God and He alone must we worship
2. Saul was given a direct command on dealing with the Amalekites. He disobeyed that command then tried to make excuses instead of asking for forgiveness. We have been given the Son of God to die on the cross for our sins so whoever believes in him shall be saved. "How shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation?" (Hebrews 2:3).

Youth: Do you know how lucky you are to be a United States citizen?

Adults: Do you make every effort to give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's?

Prayer: Father, as much as we love our country let us always be cognizant that you are the creator of Heaven and earth and all we have is a gift from your gracious bounty and that we should be eternally grateful. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

***Presbyterian Foundation Group, Presbyterian Publishing Group
and Presbyterian Investment and Loan Program***

Resurrection Sandwich

by Jennifer Monroe

Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering... Little girl, I say to you, get up! -Mark 5:34b and 4:41b

Mark 5:21-43 represents what some Biblical scholars have picturesquely called a “Markan sandwich”. This happens when Mark begins to tell one story, (the first slice of bread) interrupts himself to tell another story, (ham, cheese, lettuce, and tomato), and then finishes the first one (second slice of bread). Rather than being evidence of an unorganized or sloppy style of writing, Markan sandwiches call the readers’ attention to the fact that Mark is trying to connect the one story with the other, saying, “These two stories are actually about the same thing!”

Mark begins by telling of a distraught father come to beg Jesus to heal his dying daughter. Jesus starts on his way, but is interrupted when a woman who has been bleeding for *twelve years* gets close enough to him to touch his cloak and is healed. This woman has been ceremonially unclean, shunned and kept out of the community. For all practical purposes, this woman is dead. She has no business being in the midst of a great crowd, and she knows that touching Jesus could make him unclean as well. She believes that if she can just touch his clothes, she will be healed. Miraculously, she is! Not only has she been healed, but this woman is alive again. She has been saved. Mark’s sandwich concludes with a description of how Jesus, finally arriving at Jairus’ house, finds the little girl already dead. He goes to her, takes her by the hand and says, “Little girl, I say to you, get up!”—and she does! Mark takes pains to point out to us the beautiful detail that this girl is *twelve years* old. It’s as if he’s saying, “Pay attention! There’s a pattern here!” The point is, the resurrection that Jesus brings is not just about raising literally dead people to life, (or simply promising Christians life after death) but also about taking those who are marginalized and considered “unclean”, those who are figuratively dead, and restoring them to life as well. His resurrection is not only about something that will happen someday in the future, but also about the life that everyone can find in him, right now!

Youth: What do you think it would be like to be the little girl brought back to life?

Adults: Where is one place you have seen or are seeing resurrection?

Prayer: Jesus, you are the Lord and giver of life. We celebrate the fact that your resurrection is both for now and for the future. Give us eyes to see it happening all around us. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

The Synod of the Northeast (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont)

SATURDAY, JULY 25 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalm 56:1-13

2 Samuel 1:1-16

Acts 15:22-35

Mark 6:1-13

Psalm 118:1-9

Go Ye and Build

by Dale McArthur

Then the apostles and elders, with the whole church, decided to choose some of their own men and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They chose Judas (called Barsabbas) and Silas, two men who were leaders among the brothers. -Acts 15:22

One of the most moving ceremonies in the life of the church that spawned Joan and I, was the act of sending out families to mother and start a new congregation. The congregation would determine where the new church was to be located, who we would send out to start it, costs and a plan was presented. When all was ready, the team was chosen and the service was conducted. From the chancel area of the church, the team was dedicated.

People sent were generally leaders who had trained their replacements and who could take two years of their life to serve God in this special way. It is said by some that this was the model for establishing our Peace Corps.

It took a very special person to be selected and sent on such an important task. A person with a real relationship with God, a real prayer life, and knowledge of the Bible, and the working of the church structure. The building team was sent out and we felt an emptiness but also a feeling of pride spread over the church as new growth developed and new people assumed positions of leadership.

The phrase "Here am I, send me" keeps going through a person's mind. When will I be ready to go on such an important journey for God. We begin to check the inventory of our traits. How's my prayer life? My personal relationship with God? Am I ready for such an important commission? Will the congregation send me? We could only analyze our faith and prepare to be selected.

An equally moving ceremony was held when the two year project was completed and the team returned home to be relieved of their commission. Many stories of love and celebration were shared by the team as a new church had been dedicated.

It's obvious that this kind of a project would be the goal of our spiritual life as disciples of Jesus.

Youth: Could you be part of such a team? It would be a growth opportunity.

Adults: Aren't we building a new church every day as we train our families to be followers of Jesus?

Prayer: Send us, Lord, when we are ready to represent you, even though it is just to the next pew. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

Albany Presbytery (New York)

SUNDAY, JULY 26 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalm 67:1-7

2 Samuel 1:17-27

Romans 12:9-21

Matthew 25:31-46

Psalm 46:1-11

Final Judgment

by John McKee

“Jesus, remember me

“When you come into your Kingdom.”

Said a crucified thief at his side.

**“Truly, I say to you,
“Today you’ll be with me
“In Paradise.”** Lord Jesus replied.

The word... *‘Paradise’*... Jesus used

To the penitent thief...

He used as a synonym for Heaven.

Saint Paul spoke of Paradise

In Second Corinthians 12:4...

As did Saint John in Revelation 2:7.

God has reserved Paradise
As a place for believers...
On this, the Bible has much to tell.

The righteous have always
Gone to Paradise (or Heaven),
And the wicked to Hades (or Hell).

Both of these places

Are but “temporary residence”

Until that day when Christ is to return

In majestic power and glory
With his angelic host...
That moment for which Christians yearn.

He’ll judge the quick and the dead...
From the *“Book of Life”* contents...
Each judgment to be based upon deeds.

Those whose names Christ finds written

Are rewarded life everlasting...

Those unwritten shall be burned as weeds.

And this is the second death.
Eternal damnation.
To burn forever in the *“Lake of Fire.”*

God is then to create
A new heaven and earth
And the first Heaven and earth shall expire

Let us join in prayer for:

Metropolitan/Urban Ministry

MONDAY, JULY 27 LECTONARY READINGS

Psalm 57:1-11

2 Samuel 2:1-11

Acts 15:36-16:5

Mark 6:14-29

Psalm 85:1-13

Saint John, the Baptist

by John McKee

We know little about John...

Also known as, '*the Baptist*'...

Of whom the Prophet, Isaiah, foretold.

We know he prepared the way

For the Lord Jesus Christ...

That John the Baptist was incredibly *bold*.

Living in the harsh wilderness

Eating locusts and wild honey...

Wearing a robe made of animal skin.

John roamed throughout Judea

With his following of Disciples

It's unclear with just how many men...

Preaching to workers and soldiers...

Religious leaders and others...

He encouraged them all to repent.

John was waist-deep in the Jordan

Baptizing both Jews *and* Gentiles...

When up to him the Lord Jesus Christ went.

As Jesus waded up to him

And asked to be baptized...

John said Jesus should be baptizing *him*...

John knew God had sent Christ

For the salvation of mankind...

He was blameless...this Lamb without sin.

But the Pharisees and Sadducees

He called a "***brood of vipers***"...

Who must repent, for they were sinful men.

John chastised Galilee's governor...

A man named, Herod Antipas,

Causing that arrogant man much chagrin.

For John boldly told Herod
He was breaking God's law
Taking Herodias...his brother Philip's wife.

The Governor placed John in prison
At the insistence of Herodias
Who demanded Herod take Saint John's life.

When Herodias' daughter, Salome
Danced at his birthday banquet...
After she'd danced, Herod drunkenly said,

*'You may have anything you ask for...
'Up to half of my kingdom.'*
Herodias told her to ask for John's head.

Let us join in prayer for:

The Presbytery of Boston (Massachusetts)

TUESDAY, JULY 28 LECTONARY READINGS

Psalm 54:1-7

2 Samuel 3:6-21

Acts 16:6-15

Mark 6:30-46

Psalm 28:1-9

Are You Hungry?

by Cheryl Moore

Do not drag me away with the wicked, with those who do evil, who speak cordially with their neighbors but harbor malice in their hearts. -Psalm 28:3

How many times have you been tempted to go down a road you really did not want to go? People tell you “it’s okay, it won’t hurt anyone”, “You should do what makes you feel good” or “Who’s gonna know? Just do it, you won’t regret it!”... But you almost always do.

When we follow after people or things that are designed to hurt us, we find no comfort or happiness. Why? “Because they regard not the works of Jehovah, Nor the operation of his hands, He will break them down and not build them up.” Psalm 28:5

You see, when we fix our eyes on things of this world and people who don’t really care for us... It’s all “empty calories” and we will go hungry. But when our eyes and hearts are firmly looking to Jesus to be nourished, giving him all the Glory and Praise, then we are much happier. When we turn to our families, instead of computer chat rooms, when we turn to our Pastor, instead of a gossiping co-worker, when you turn to your Spouse, instead of television... only then can we truly be fed. God wants us all to be where we are safe, happy and close to him.

We should strive to be like the five thousand who gathered to be with Jesus. Remember what happened?? Jesus cared, he shared, “And they all ate, and were filled” (Mark 6:42).

Youth: Do you know more about sports stars, reality television. or music artists, than Great Biblical figures? Some of these are more exciting than reality TV!! Try reading about King David! WOW!

Adult: When you get “Hunger” pains and you feel empty, where do you turn for comfort? Make a conscious effort to seek out Family, a Pastor or a Good friend who you know will pray with you and call on The Lord!

Prayer: Father, please help us see that you are the only way to be completely filled when we are empty. Let us seek hungrily after your love and not the “empty calories” offered by an unloving world! In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

The Presbytery of Cayuga-Syracuse (New York)

WEDNESDAY, JULY 29 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalm 65:1-13

2 Samuel 3:22-39

Acts 16:16-24

Mark 6:47-56

Psalm 125:1-5

In Water Over Your Head

by Karen Foss

When evening came, the boat was in the middle of the lake, and he was alone on land. He saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them. About the fourth watch of the night he went out to them, walking on the lake. He was about to pass by them, but when they saw him walking on the lake, they thought he was a ghost. They cried out, because they all saw him and were terrified. Immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down. They were completely amazed, for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened. -Mark 6:47-52

These disciples had been traveling with Jesus long enough to know that he was no ordinary man. He had been healing the sick and raising the dead. They had just watched him feed over 5,000 people with five loaves of bread and two fish. And yet, they had a hard time believing that he could walk on water and calm the wind. They knew Jesus but didn't fully understand him. After all, why would the Son of God hang around with them and choose them to be his disciples?

Sound familiar? We read about these miracles in the Bible and see little miracles in our everyday life and still do not fully understand the power of God. For many of us, our faith is very much like the disciples. When trouble comes our way, we get fearful and feel isolated and alone. The very best news is that when we are in "water over our heads," Jesus sees us and rescues us because he cares about us. *My Life Application Bible* says that "to recognize Christ's presence is the antidote for fear."

Youth: Where do you turn when trouble comes your way?

Adults: Is your faith such that you trust God to watch over you and take care of you?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, give me the faith to know that with you by my side I have no fears. You watch over me and rescue me in all my troubles. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

Eastern Korean Presbytery (Nongeographic)

God's Love in a Tree

by Anne Price

Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you. Show me the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul. -Psalm 143:8

As the sun comes up in the morning a couple of times a week I enjoy a moving meditation called Qigong in one of our local parks. I share the time with others who are into the healing arts. We may not discuss each of our own personal beliefs, but I pray silently that they feel the love of God through me. I recognize beauty in each person of our group.

I see such abundance of God's love for his world in nature. There is a tree in the corner of the park that to me represents my trust in him. It is all bent over and gnarly but still alive and standing. The roots must be deep to withstand all of the weather conditions that have occurred over the years. As we stay rooted to our Lord for our own strength, though we may not stand as tall as we once did, we too can survive as does this beautiful old tree. As we go through our movements I hear birds singing, dogs walking happily with their masters, and feel the damp grass under my feet like a heavenly carpet to walk on. The morning sun is evidence of salvation from the darkness of the night given freely from God, our Lord and Savior.

Youth: Do you love to get up in the morning knowing that God will be with you this day ahead?

Adults: Can we take a little time to go outside and look up at the rising sun and thank God for another day?

Prayer: Thank you, Father, for letting us see your beauty in nature. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

The Presbytery of Elizabeth (New Jersey)

FRIDAY, JULY 31 LECTONARY READINGS

Psalm 88:1-18

2 Samuel 5:1-12

Acts 17:1-15

Mark 7:24-37

Psalm 6:1-10

Talk It Up!

by Marie Ruiz

At this, the man's ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he began to speak plainly. Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone. But the more he did so, the more they kept talking about it. -Mark 7:35-36

I sometimes wish I could have lived during the time Jesus walked this earth. I would have followed closely observing all that I could. I think, like the people in our key verse for today, after seeing the miracles, I would have reacted in the same way - can't wait to tell someone!

And yet, we have God's word that records the miracles and stories of Jesus, but somehow, I don't have the same zeal! I'm ashamed. Those who walked with Jesus did have a firsthand experience to witness and then share, but they didn't have the whole story like we do. How incredible it is that we have not only one account but the whole collection and not only one Bible in our home, but probably several. We as Christians must take a second look at the treasure we have and proclaim the mighty works of our Lord. Become acquainted with the stories in the Bible. They are powerful and will convince even the hardest of sinners.

We are so blessed to have the written Word of God to read, study, learn from and use as our map in this life. Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift!

Youth: The Bible is the instruction guide for the way we should live. If you don't understand all the words, ask your parents or some other adult to help you understand it.

Adults: Let's make a point to study and learn from God's word. It is written down so you and I can make wise choices in this life.

Prayer: Thank you, Lord, for the gift of your word. Help us to understand clearly what it says for us today. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

The Presbytery of Genesee Valley (New York)

Northminster Presbyterian Church

**2450 East Fort Lowell Road
Tucson, Arizona 85719-2417**

520-327-7121

520-327-1839 fax

Scripture taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved.

The "NIV" and "New International Version" trademarks are registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by International Bible Society. Use of either trademark requires the permission of International Bible Society.