

Northminster Daily Devotions

August 1-31, 2009

Vol. 36 No.8



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. Don't forget... this entire resource is available to download on our website at www.npctucson.org. So tell your friends!

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, August 30, 2009.

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.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 1 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalm 122, 149 2 Samuel 5:22-6:11 Acts 17:16-34 Mark 8:1-10 Psalm 100, 63

Polyurethane

by Scott Coverdale

Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. -Psalm 100:3

The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. -Acts 17:24

I once met a woodworker who was furious at God for allowing him to become allergic to polyurethane. He took this turn of events as a divine callous disregard by God to his (the woodworker's) plan, vocation and value.

I think that there is a common theme between these two passages from our reading today. In the first, David is reminding us that we are created by God and that we belong, therefore, to him. In the second, Paul is pointing out to the philosophers of Athens that we are created by - and rightfully dependant upon - the Lord God.

I don't think that any of this is news to us church people of Northminster. I would like to consider, though, a little linguistic problem that I think sometimes affects our thinking. We speak and pray and sing songs about "our God," which is fine as far as that goes, but which can subtly lead us into thinking of God as belonging to us, and not, as it should be, of his being "our" master and "our" Lord. God is not "my" God the way that "my house" is "my" house, or the way that "my bicycle" belongs to me and carries me about wherever I pedal and steer it. We certainly belong to God, but God most emphatically does not belong to us.

I think that sometimes we fall into the thinking, or at least the feeling, that God is there to meet our needs, to facilitate our important lives, and to resolve logistical problems. We don't say this, but I think that we act like it sometimes. This is most visible when we become frustrated or angry with God for not doing things the way that we want or expect him to. Sort of like the polyurethane.

Youth: Why is it important to remember that we belong to God?

Adults: Do you ever think of God in the possessive sense? What does it take to correct this perspective?

Prayer: Thank you, God, for creating us and claiming us as your own. We are yours. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

The Presbytery of Geneva (New York)

Behold the Lamb of God

by John McKee

“Behold the Lamb of God”

Said John the Baptist,

“Who takes away the world’s sin.”

John bore witness to Jesus
As he was walking toward them
While John was talking to two men.

The men were John’s disciples
Who made a decision for Christ
When they heard John the Baptist speak.

They began to follow this Jesus
Who turned when he saw them,
Asking of them, “**What do you seek?**”

Calling him ‘Rabbi’
(Which means Teacher),
They asked him where he would stay.

“**Come and see.**” Jesus said,
So they both came with him,
And they remained with him that day.

One of the two was called Andrew,
Brother of Simon Peter,
Who ran to tell the news to his brother,

Saying, “*We have found the Messiah!*”
He brought Peter to Jesus
And introduced them to each other.

Jesus decided the next day
To take his new Disciples
Into the City of Galilee...

There, a young man named Philip
Joined with the group,
When Jesus said to him, “**Follow me.**”

Though he had but few men
When his ministry began,
His following is worldwide today.

When you invite this man, Jesus,
John called, ‘The Lamb of God’...
He will enter into your heart to stay.

Let us join in prayer for:

Pittsburgh Theological Seminary

God's Priorities

by Jennifer Monroe

Now then, tell my servant David, "This is what the LORD Almighty says: I took you from the pasture and from following the flock to be ruler over my people Israel. I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all your enemies from before you. Now I will make your name great, like the names of the greatest men of the earth. And I will provide a place for my people Israel and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed. Wicked people will not oppress them anymore, as they did at the beginning. -2 Samuel 7:8-10a

To David, I'm sure it seems like a no-brainer. Here he is, living in a sumptuous palace, and the ark of God's covenant (the symbol of God's special presence and relationship with Israel) is housed in a tent. Surely the right thing to do would be to build a magnificent temple for the ark, in honor of the God who is Israel's true ruler and King. All of the other nations have great temples for their gods. Shouldn't Israel's God have one too?

But Israel's God is nothing like the gods of the surrounding nations. God gently reminds David, "Are you the one to build me a house to dwell in? I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought the Israelites up out of Egypt to this day. I have been moving from place to place with a tent as my dwelling. Wherever I have moved with all the Israelites, did I ever say to any of their rulers whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, 'Why have you not build me a house of cedar?'" (2 Samuel 7:5-7).

It's not at all that David's desire was incorrect or that God is displeased with him. In fact, notice the covenant God makes with David: God is going to "establish a house" for David that is going to "endure forever." It's as though God is saying, "Thanks, David, that's a great idea, but no thanks." And why? Because God has a different job in mind for this man after his own heart. David's role is not to be the temple-builder, but the protector of Israel, the shepherd of God's people. In God's priorities, people come first. Only after Israel is at peace and at rest in a home of its own will it be important to begin work on the temple. In all of our planning and our own grand visions for great things we would like to "build" for God, it's good to be reminded that caring for his people should always come first.

Youth: What's one way you can show your care for God's people?

Adults: Can you think of any projects of your own that might need to be put on hold so that you can take better care of people?

Prayer: Almighty God, we thank you that though you are worthy of the grandest temples, you care more about the welfare of your people. Remind us of your priorities. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

The Presbytery of Hudson River (New York)

God's Love For Man and Beast

by Anne Price

Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains, your justice like the great deep. O LORD, you preserve both man and beast. -Psalm 36:6

I first look at the word righteousness by God's standards. Matching life with God's commandments, love and purposeful action based on love for God and a relationship with God. Now I think of God giving us the ability to preserve man and beast.

At the present I am reading a book called Blue Zones which takes us across the world to learn how people live independently at the age of 100 or more. The spiritual aspect of these elders is evident in each of their stories. They eat different diets, move their bodies throughout their daily activities and meet with others for socialization.

There will always be new so called anti-aging techniques that people will spend their last dollar on, yet most have been just passing fads. I see God's hand in nature every day. There is a mother bird sitting on her nest in our carport. She protects her babies and feeds them until they are ready to fly away. Seeing that bird family helps me to know joy though my children are in California and Texas.

As I walked our Scotties, one put up her paw. There was a cactus thorn in it. As I removed it she happily walked on. It gave me a picture of my lifting my hurt to God. He removes the pain and I go on. God preserves man and animals when we go to him.

The soul is a gift from God. How we nurture it is our gift in return.

Youth: Do you feel the love of God for you as you pet your animals?

Adults: As we protect our earth do we see how God preserves it even when we mess up?

Prayer: Thank you, Father, for holding us close to you along with all that is visible and invisible to our eyes. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

The Presbytery of Long Island (New York)

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 5 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalm 96, 147:1-11

2 Samuel 9:1-13

Acts 19:1-10

Mark 8:34-9:1

Psalm 36, 7

You Can Lead A Horse...

by Karen Foss

Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God. ⁹But some of them became obstinate; they refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way. So Paul left them. He took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. -Acts 19:8-9

Paul preached for three months and still didn't convince some of the Jews that Jesus was the Way. So he picked up and went to the province of Asia, (this refers to Asia Minor or modern day Turkey). Paul and the disciples spent over two years there and God did many miracles through Paul.

Have you ever tried to evangelize? It's not easy is it? Sometimes you feel that you're pouring your heart out to someone and they're just not getting it. This must have been what Paul felt like in the synagogue. He's trying to spread the word about Jesus and the Jews weren't buying it. Let's face it; some people just don't want to hear about Jesus and the kingdom of God. That's when it's time for plan B. Just biding your time and living your faith and waiting for that one day when something will happen to the person you're trying to convince. This could be a death, divorce or some other life changing experience and you will then have the opportunity to share your story with them. Be prepared to tell them how God has helped you through something similar and what he has done in your life. You never know when that time will come, so be ready and willing to share your faith with them.

Youth: Do you have a friend that could use your help and your story to straighten out their life. Are you ready to help them?

Adults: Are you prepared to help someone with your faith story. If not, write your story down on paper and practice it just like an exam. Someone will need to hear it sooner or later.

Prayer: Lord, you have changed my life so much. Help me share my faith with someone who needs to hear my story. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

The Presbytery of Monmouth (New Jersey)

THURSDAY, AUGUST 6 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalm 116, 147:12-20 2 Samuel 11:1-27 Acts 19:11-20 Mark 9:2-13 Psalm 26, 130

Will We Pass God's Test?

by Judy Williams

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. -Psalm 26:2-3

In this passage of today's Psalm, David is seeking assurance of God's forgiveness and grace. While aware that he has fallen short of the ideal of living a perfectly sinless life, he speaks of trusting in the Lord and of his sure knowledge that God's love is always with him.

In today's bewildering world we, too, often find ourselves needing reassurance that God has forgiven the many mistakes we make as we try to live lives "continually in God's truth." We need to remind ourselves that God's love is ever before us and that through our faith we are truly forgiven.

The world we live in gives us many opportunities to be tested, doesn't it?

In school there are tests given on every subject we study. (And if we don't study well enough, we probably won't do well on the tests!) If we want to drive a car, we must first pass the test to receive a license. If a need arises for us to borrow money from a bank, we must pass a test proving that we will be able to repay the loan. We learn to pass the world's tests. How much more important it is that we learn how to pass God's test! The best way to study for this examination is to learn what the Bible says about how we should live in preparation for eternity.

Then when the Lord tests us, examining our hearts and minds, we will be certain of his love and truth.

Youth: Do you know that God always loves you and that you can trust him to forgive you when you make a mistake?

Adults: Are you willing to ask God to test you and examine your heart and your mind right now? Or would you decide that you needed more time to study and prepare for that test?

Prayer: Father in Heaven, every moment we live is a moment of preparation for our eternal life with you. Help us to walk continually in your truth. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

The Presbytery of New Brunswick (New Jersey)

Sharing God

by Marie Ruiz

The city clerk quieted the crowd and said: "Men of Ephesus, doesn't all the world know that the city of Ephesus is the guardian of the temple of the great Artemis and of her image, which fell from heaven? Therefore, since these facts are undeniable, you ought to be quiet and not do anything rash." -Acts 19:35-36

As Paul and his fellow partners, Gaius and Aristarchus, spread the news of the Way, they met with those who were threatened by the words spoken. The truth always has a way of getting down to the core. What is so impressive to me about this scripture passage is how God intervened for Gaius and Aristarchus in a most unusual way.

Paul, their counterpart and head of this team who went to Ephesus would normally have gone to defend his brothers to obtain their release. But instead the city clerk, wanting to restore order to his city, made an appeal to the people about the importance of their goddess Artemis dispelling all fear about what Paul and his fellowmen were proclaiming. God in his sovereign way knew full well before Paul embarked on the city of Ephesus what was needed and set in motion the events that would take the "heat" out of the situation and therefore worked for Paul's good.

Circumstances may seem grim to us, but God in his infinite wisdom provides a way of escape. Trusting God in every situation is key to faith building.

Youth: Sometimes telling others about our faith is not popular and we can be criticized. However, God will always be by your side whenever you proclaim the Good News to your friends.

Adults: Has your voice been quieted by others of different beliefs? Let the truth be proclaimed! It is God they reject, not you, and God can handle himself!

Prayer: Thank you, Lord, for the knowledge you have imparted to us for sharing with others. Let us not be discouraged when your words fall on deaf ears. Let us look to you for strength and wisdom in proclaiming your Good news! Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

The Presbytery of New York City

SATURDAY, AUGUST 8 LECTONARY READINGS

Psalm 63, 149

2 Samuel 12:15-31

Acts 20:1-16

Mark 9:30-41

Psalm 125, 90

Children Everywhere

by Dale McArthur

He took a little child and had him stand among them. Taking him in his arms, he said to them, "Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me." -Mark 9:36-37

There is no event more exciting than the first worship service for a new congregation in their new building. It was Palm Sunday and the crowd began to arrive. The new sanctuary could not seat them all and they were standing in the aisles. The choir left the choir loft for extra seating and sat at the edge of the chancel. We asked the children to give up their seats and be seated on the floor of the chancel.

The service progressed but during the sermon the children asked questions of the pastor. It made for a lively sermon, the parents enjoyed it and it set a pattern for future sermons of clarity. There was a small baby in the congregation held by its mother and the pastor picked up the baby and preached holding the baby. It was not known until later that the family of the baby was Jewish. They later became Christian and joined the congregation.

This was a lesson for the congregation that children can lead them if we will but allow them the freedom with supervision to be who they are. That is what Jesus meant in the scripture - so as we welcome children, we also welcome the one who sent them.

Children everywhere - it is a good thing!

Youth: Do you have the opportunity to relate to younger children? If not, visit the Sunday School and pick up their excitement.

Adults: Has it been a long time since there has been children in your house? Do you miss them? They could put spring back into your steps.

Prayer: Gracious Father, thank you for the privilege of having children among us as messengers that bring us your love. Thank you for allowing us to give love a chance. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

The Presbytery of Newark (New Jersey)

SUNDAY, AUGUST 9 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalms 103, 150 2 Samuel 13:1-22 Romans 15:1-13 John 3:22-36 Psalm 117, 139

You Only Think You Want That

by Pete Seiferth

For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. -Romans 15:4

Sometimes reading the Bible is difficult. For someone new to the Bible, it can seem like an incredibly intimidating book. My study Bible has over 2,000 pages. When was the last time you read a 2,000 page book?

Paul understood that different folks are at different stages of faith, and that the “strong ought to beat with the feelings of the weak and not to please ourselves.” As a part of the whole body of Christ growing towards maturity, it means reading scripture together, some teaching, some learning, all while the Spirit of God offers insights and understandings and applications that are fresh and vital food for our souls. We discover through stories of the past, that God works through history to seek, to find, to turn lives around, and to save.

The story of Amnon and Tamar is a tragic story that we might be surprised wasn't censored long ago. It is a story of uncontrolled lust and how that sin can lead someone to deny the image of God in someone (even one's sister) by using them for selfish pleasure. The rape of Tamar is satisfying to no one, and the disgrace and bitterness grows in the family of David, leading to brother killing brother. This is the type of selfish bad behavior that began in the Garden of Eden, and continues to this day whenever we participate in desiring what ought not be ours. Lusting and desiring sometimes even makes us ill at the thought of going without the object of our passions.

Through the scriptures, and through the person and work of Jesus Christ, we discover God's plan for reshaping our hearts and desires—after the things that God's loves and pursues.

Youth: Have you ever felt sick about wanting something so bad? Did you get what you wanted? How long did the good feelings last?

Adults: What is currently on your must have list? How might God help you put that desire into perspective by understanding God's desires more?

Prayer: Lord, replace the sinful desires of my heart with the holy and pure desires of your heart. Let me seek your face through the pages of your Word. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

Homelessness/Affordable Housing

Generation Ask

by Jennifer Monroe

One generation will commend your works to another; they will tell of your mighty acts. They will speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty, and I will meditate on your wonderful works. -Psalm 145:4-5

When I was younger, I loved to sit and listen to my Grandma Bierma tell stories about her life, what it was like growing up during the Depression, being a young woman during World War II, and raising eight children on a small farm. Through all of her stories ran a thread of faithfulness - God's faithfulness to her and, in response, her faithfulness to God. Today she is in her nineties and living in a retirement home. She doesn't get around very much anymore, but she still plays a mean game of Scrabble (it's said no one in the family can beat her). I know that she loves hearing stories about what God is doing in all of her children's and grandchildren's lives, from the missionary in Bangladesh to the seventh grader in Sioux Falls, and she prays for all of us, every single day.

I consider myself very fortunate to be able to look back at the generations of my family and realize that, indeed, they have commended God's works to one another. I know that when I tell my children stories about God's faithfulness and teach them about his love for them, I am continuing in a tradition that goes back for many generations. Not all of us might have this kind of heritage, and not all of us live in close proximity to multiple generations of our family, but we all have the chance to experience the privilege of sharing God's greatness from "one generation to another" by being part of a church. It is so very good for us "younger people" to take the time to simply sit and listen to the stories that older people in the church have to share about God's mighty acts. With these stories can come a wealth of wisdom and experience that can provide some needed perspective and peace. It is also good for all of us "older people" to be patient and listen to the stories that younger people have to tell. With these stories can come passion, excitement and new ways of looking at old problems. What a gift it is, to be able to worship and fellowship with people who aren't the same age as yourself!

Youth: When was the last time you sat and listened to your parents or your grandparents telling stories about their lives? What did you learn?

Adults: How can you be intentional about sharing God's greatness from "one generation to another"?

Prayer: God of all generations, we praise you for your faithfulness over the years. Give us the grace to really listen to and learn from each other. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

The Presbytery of Newton (New Jersey)

TUESDAY, AUGUST 11 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalm 42, 146

2 Samuel 14:1-20

Acts 21:1-14

Mark 10:1-16

Psalm 102, 133

The Cure for Christian Thrust

by Jerry Smith

As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?

-Psalm 42:1-2a

Oh, we should thirst as directed by Matthew 5:6, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled." But let us not forget that Jesus gave us the cure for thirsting when he said, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." (John 7:37b-39 NKJ). But this he spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus wasn't yet glorified.

So the cure for Christian thirsting is the Holy Spirit. We main-line Christians have the tendency to call upon the Holy Spirit on certain occasions be they few and far between. When in fact the Holy Spirit wants to be in our life 24/7. He wants to be involved in every area of our life. Just look at his titles, teacher, counselor, comforter, helper, prays for us, convicts us of sin, no man or woman can call Jesus Lord except by the Spirit, his fruit is love, joy peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control, etc. How can we deny him continuous access to our lives. But what he desires even more is for us to desire him in our lives so much that we would ask God to fill us with his presence, "and how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him" Luke 11:13.

Youth: Do you realize that the promise of the Holy Spirit is for your asking?

Adults: Why do we procrastinate about asking God to fill us with his most precious promise of the Holy Spirit?

Prayer: Father, you have promised your Spirit to every believer who asks. Let us ask and keep on asking. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

The Presbytery of Northern New England

(Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont)

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 12 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalm 89:1-18, 147:1-11 2 Samuel 14:21-33 Acts 21:15-26 Mark 10:17-31 Psalm 1, 33

Acclaim the Lord

by Jennifer Hager

Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim you, who walk in the light of your presence, O LORD. -Psalm 89:15

In this beautiful Psalm, the writer proclaims his devotion to the Lord and sings of the power and glory of the Lord in all the earth. The psalmist acknowledges the Lord's creation of the heavens, the earth and all that is in it. He praises the Lord for His righteousness and justice, love and faithfulness.

In verse 15, the writer praises the blessedness of those who acclaim the presence of the Lord in all things.

Sometimes, we worry and wait to speak of our Lord to others. We are hesitant to speak of our strength and hope in the Lord. We know the Holy Spirit will guide us and provide the message he intends. But still we wait.

This Psalm provides a good guide for us to acclaim the Lord. Let us tell of the wonders of the earth and heavens and all of God's beings. These simple and straightforward praises will lead us into further testimony of God's power and love in us.

Youth: Do you tell your friends at school about Sunday school and the Lord Jesus?

Adults: How do we acclaim the Lord in our lives?

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, Almighty God, make my life a light in your presence. Show me your will so I can acclaim you in all I do. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

The Presbytery of Northern New York

THURSDAY, AUGUST 13 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalm 97, 147:12-20

2 Samuel 15:1-18

Acts 21:27-36

Mark 10:32-45

Psalm 16, 62

Servant Leadership

by Dick Leon

Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." -Mark 10:42-45

I've read several books recently about Abraham Lincoln. What an amazing man! Among all his accomplishments the one thing that impressed me the most was his humility. He was the one to walk to a subordinate's office or home rather than beckon them to come to him. When members of his cabinet messed up he took the blame! He took time to be with people who were outside the circles of power and status even at the risk of offending the high and mighty.

For example: At one time he hosted Stephen Douglas, the first black man welcomed into the White House as a guest, when the governor of Vermont came to see him. He sent word to the governor to wait a bit because he was "talking with his friend Stephen Douglas."

Our world has so many things backward. Take power for instance. We have too many who model the theory that power has its privileges that can be used to feather their own nests! Jesus shows us that power is not "for us" but "for others." Someone once said it this way:

"A politician is someone who looks to the next election, but a statesman is someone who looks to the next generation."

Jesus likes men and women who use power in a "statesman-like" fashion!

Youth: When you are given leadership responsibilities do you see that as a chance to feather your nest or to serve the interests of others?

Adults: How have you used power in your lifetime?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, remind us again how good life can be when we follow your example and your teaching and serve others rather than serve ourselves. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

The Presbytery of the Palisades (New Jersey)

FRIDAY, AUGUST 14 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalm 51, 148

2 Samuel 15:19-37

Acts 21:37-22:16

Mark 10:46-52

Psalm 142, 65

Do You Call on the Holy Spirit?

by Frank Shallenberger

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

-Psalm 51:10

David had committed adultery with Bathsheba. He at first thought no one knew of this, except Bathsheba. However, Nathan had informed him that he had sinned before God who knows all things. David then confessed to God. He asked God to take the evil desires away from him and give him only pure thoughts. This is the very same request that Paul wrote in his letter to the Philippians, chapter 4, verse 8, "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - think about such things."

David wanted more than God's forgiveness. He wanted not only pure thoughts but he wanted strength of spirit to keep him on the straight and narrow. Every time you and I pray to God to forgive us our trespasses, our sins against him, we first ask for his mercy and forgiveness. After telling the Lord about our sins we should then ask that he give us a pure heart that we think only about those things which are true, noble, right, pure, lovely and admirable. And, of course, the strength of the Holy Spirit of whom David knew nothing. If he had, the word "spirit" would've been capitalized.

Whenever I confess my sins, which I try to do at least once a day, I always ask the Holy Spirit to keep my mind on those things which Paul has recommended. I feel whenever I do that, I am best able to avoid the occasions of sin. What about you?

Youth: Do you realize that you can sin by your thoughts?

Adults: Do you remember to ask the Holy Spirit to give you true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable thoughts when you confess?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, with our confessions help us to ask the Holy Spirit to put our thoughts on heavenly rather than earthly things. It's in your holy name we ask this. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

The Presbytery of Southern New England
(Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island)

SATURDAY, AUGUST 15 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalm 104, 149

2 Samuel 16:1-23

Acts 22:17-29

Mark 11:1-11

Psalm 138, 98

The Triumphal Entry

by John McKee

A crowd followed Jesus
As he went out from Jericho
After healing two there who were blind...

With their eyesight restored,
Both men joined the great crowd
In joyful praise the two followed behind.

When his large entourage
Drew near to Jerusalem,
Calling two of his Disciples aside,

Jesus told them to go
Into a village nearby
Where an ass and her young colt were tied...

He said to untie them
And bring them to him...
That the prophecy would come to pass...

*Daughter of Zion, behold
Your King comes to you humbly,
Upon a colt, the foal of an ass.'*

Bringing the ass and her colt
To him as he'd directed,
The two placed their cloaks upon them...

And Jesus rode into Jerusalem
Over the palm fronds and the garments
That the joyful crowds spread before him.

They were shouting, "Hosanna
"To the Son of David!
"Blessed is he who comes...

"In the name of the Lord!
"Hosanna in the highest!"
Over the timbrels, cymbals and drums.

Let us join in prayer for:

The Presbytery of Susquehanna Valley (New York)

SUNDAY, AUGUST 16 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalm 19, 150

2 Samuel 17:1-23

Galatians 3:6-14

John 5:30-47

Psalm 81, 113

The Heavens Declare the Glory of God

by John Charles Cheek

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. In the heavens he has pitched a tent for the sun. -Psalm 19:1-4

The forty some-odd years that have passed since I was a teenager have worn some of the sharp edges off my memories of those times. Many of my experiences are kind of half-remembered, half-forgotten. From time-to-time, I'll remember a face, but not be able to put a name to it.

Other memories, though, are crystal clear. It was a tradition during my high school years that a group of us would go caroling on Christmas Eve. Out in the country, where I was reared, caroling door-to-door means driving from ranch to farm to ranch. To get out of a warm car and walk to the front yard, to stand shivering under a brilliant sky with untold numbers of stars shining, sing about the birth of our Savior and King and wish the family Merry Christmas and then move on. These are among my most precious memories of that time. And even today, when I look up into a night sky, I get a little of the feeling of those times.

Youth: Look up into a night sky and see the stars. What are some words that you could use to describe what you see?

Adults: When was the last time you really looked at the night sky? Take time to do that, and consider what the beauty of the sky tells you about God.

Prayer: Lord God, thank you for the beauty of your heavens, and for the beauty of your love for us. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

Higher Education

MONDAY, AUGUST 17 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalm 135, 145 2 Samuel 17:24-18:8 Acts 22:30-23:11 Mark 11:12-26 Psalm 97, 112

Thy Will be Done

by Jennifer Hager

Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. -Mark 11:24

The Lord has given us so many ways to grow in our relationship with him. Many of the Psalms exhort us in worship and praise. We are shown the joy of singing and making beautiful music unto the Lord.

In the New Testament, our Lord Jesus and his disciples often refer to the Scriptures in their teaching. The Lord has given us his word so we can learn about his nature and his will for us to grow closer to him.

In this passage from Mark, Jesus clearly tells us his purpose for us in prayer. But what are we to ask? God knows our hearts and he has a plan for us. Let us ask each day in prayer that his will be done. If we believe that we will receive God's will and that we have received God's will, it will be ours.

Youth: Do you turn to Jesus in prayer when you don't know what to do? His will for you will be made known when you do.

Adults: Do you daily ask God for his will in your life?

Prayer: Almighty God, we ask only for your will in our lives. Let me turn to you in prayer throughout my day and my life. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

The Presbytery of Utica (New York)

TUESDAY, AUGUST 18 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalm 123, 146

2 Samuel 18:9-18

Acts 23:12-24

Mark 11:27-12:12

Psalm 30, 86

The Measure of Treasure

by Cheryl Moore

Have mercy on us, O LORD, have mercy on us, for we have endured much contempt. We have endured much ridicule from the proud, much contempt from the arrogant. -Psalm 123:3-4

These days, it's hard not to notice all of the "Big Wigs" flying around in corporate jets or sports stars basking in the glory of the spotlight for being able to "play ball" or people who make millions just for "looking good"... It's frustrating for us "everyday" people not to feel a little incensed by these "perceived" blessings.

Some folks inherited fame and fortune. Some worked hard, some were just blessed and yes... some did very bad things and now are "at ease" with their wealth and worse yet, they flaunt it!

Now, it's perfectly fine to be prosperous! If you are, you must remember to be humble, kind and generous. If not, remember that prosperity does not always appear in a paycheck or dividend.

Jesus said "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth..." Matthew 6:19. God has so much more in store for us! "...His favor is for a life-time: Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy cometh in the morning" Psalm 30:5.

Maybe God has blessed you with enough in life to be very comfortable and bless others or you are struggling to make ends meet. Maybe you are popular or few people know you?

If you have self-respect, patience, kindness, humility, peace, happiness, endurance, love; any of these things and a strong, close relationship with Jesus then my friend, you are prosperous beyond most!

"As for me, I said in my prosperity, I shall never be moved" Psalm 30:6.

Youth: Do you want what other people have, or do you count the blessings you have been given, no matter how small? They may lead to wonderful things God has planned for you!

Adult: Do you let your contempt for someone else's prosperity get in the way of the true happiness God intended for you? How do you measure your treasure?

Prayer: Father, make us truly grateful for all of the blessings you give us, great and small, for our true treasure is to someday be with you! In Jesus' name. Amen!

Let us join in prayer for:

The Presbytery of West Jersey

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 19 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalm 15, 147:1-11 2 Samuel 18:19-33 Acts 23:23-35 Mark 12:13-27 Psalm 48, 4

Not Always What it Appears to Be

by Dale McArthur

LORD, who may dwell in your sanctuary? Who may live on your holy hill? He whose walk is blameless and who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from his heart. -Psalm 15:1-2

Resting on my desk is a mean looking rock that appears to be from an Indian tomahawk. It is a family rock passed down from generation to generation with many a story attached to it. One can visualize it strapped to a hickory limb and swung by a large Indian brave in battle. At least this was the tradition that we all understood until recently we had a visitor in our home who was an expert in Indian relics. He saw the rock on my desk and immediately identified it as a rock used by Indian women to grind corn.

Now this rock has been changed from one of devastation and pain to one used by women for sustenance of life. Things are not always as they appear to be.

One Lenten season we decided to have a Wednesday night program of supper and worship. We advertised it on television inviting young parents and their children knowing that most of the young families in that community had two working parents. We thought it to be a real service for these families.

The opening night arrived and in attendance were carloads of retired people but no young families. We had a wonderful Lenten season but it goes to show us that we never know who we are serving when we plan a program. Things are not always as they appear to be. The Lord decides who dwells in his sanctuary.

Youth: Do you check twice when you see a new opportunity? It may not be as it appears to be.

Adults: Do you recall the number of times you were surprised by people and events that were not as they appeared to be?

Prayer: Gracious Father, Thank you for giving us guidance so we can hold people and events up to the guidelines of your love. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

The Presbytery of Western New York

The Most Important Commandments?

by Frank Shallenberger

One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?" "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these." "Well said, teacher," the man replied. "You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices." -Mark 12,28-33

The world might change but people never seem to. I imagine there are people who read this devotional concerned with the same question that the teacher of the law asked 2000 years ago. There are Ten Commandments. What are the most important? Actually, the question might be phrased another way. Out of the Ten Commandments, which are the ones which I'd better not break?

This particular teacher understood the gospel message very well. He not only commended Jesus for his answer but he then made this comment: "You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him to love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."

Today, we might interpret that a bit differently since we don't make burnt offerings and sacrifices anymore. It all boils down to a four letter word: "Love." Love is the Christian four letter word.

Youth: Do you know the Christian four letter word? If you do, do you know what it means?

Adults: Are you able to love your neighbors even if you don't like them?

Prayer: Jesus, you taught us to love our neighbors and our enemies. That's not an easy thing to do. Without you, we can do little but with you we can do anything. Help us to be like you. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

Frontier Areas of Central and Southeast Asia (Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, & Uzbekistan and Cambodia, Laos, & Vietnam)

How to be a “Big Giver”

by Dick Leon

Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything - all she had to live on.” -Mark 12:41-44

The widow’s gift was puny compared with the gifts of rich people. From the point of view of those watching it was the rich people who were the “Big Givers” and the poor widow was hardly noticed.

But (as always) Jesus turns the story upside down. At the end it is the poor widow who is the “Big Giver” while the others are shown to have been miserly in their gifts to God! This story supports the wise teaching on Christian stewardship that our giving should be proportionate to our wealth. The “tithe” is the great equalizer among all of us. Giving ten percent puts us all on the same level. We can all be “Big Givers” when our gift is tithe-proportionate to our wealth!

And what motive might lead the widow to give her all and might lead us to give a tithe or more? Some give out of guilt, or maybe shame, or the desire to impress, or an attempt to buy one’s way into God’s favor. Those are grudging motives. Such motives only produce a reluctant and miserly gift and leave us miserable!

No, I think that the only motive that might explain the widow’s lavish gift, or our bold tithing, is gratitude to God for all he has given us!

Youth: Do you give anything to God as a sign of gratitude for his love for you?

Adults: Think first about all God has given you and then ask yourself this question: is my stewardship an appropriate expression of how grateful I am for all the Lord has given me in my life?

Prayer: Mighty Lord, we do love you in response to your amazing love for us. Let our stewardship of our money, our time and our talents be appropriate signs of just how grateful we really are for your love and goodness in our lives. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

Republics of Central Asia

(Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan)

SATURDAY, AUGUST 22 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalm 56, 149 2 Samuel 23:1-7,13-17 Acts 25:13-27 Mark 13:1-13 Psalm 118, 111

End Times

by Scott Coverdale

When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. -Mark 13:7

I knew a man named Bobby, who, whenever he was surprised or heard really exciting news, used to say, "It's the End Times, man." He said that a lot. He seemed almost surprised every day when he looked at the sky and didn't see Jesus coming down on a cloud with a million angels and trumpets and fiery chariots.

Bobby lived in Denver and gave his life away to punk rockers and junkies and street kids. He had long black hair and his face was scarred like his gravelly voice. I remember standing with Bobby one day as a big thunderstorm ripped through the sky. Rain was coming sideways under the eaves of the old church where we had tried to find shelter and he had this huge smile on his wet face as he shouted above the storm, "It's the End Times, man!"

Bobby lived like he had all the time in the world. He would sit and talk for hours to a shopping cart lady or listen to kids even if all they were talking about was television shows and messed-up-family-news. He would tell those kids about Jesus like he was letting them in on a secret.

Bobby had a long, tough medical history. Finally, when he was about forty, his body gave up. He ended up in ICU on a respirator. After a couple of days his family and friends gathered around to pray and sing and shut down the machines. Bobby's nephew, who was five, was watching through the window, but his mother said that it was time for them to go.

"But mommy, I want to stay," he protested. "I want to watch the angel."

"What angel, Joey?" she asked him, tears running down her face.

"The angel sitting on Uncle Bobby's tummy," he replied.

"What is the angel doing?" asked the boy's mother.

"He is singing," said Joey. "He is just singing, 'Amazing, amazing, amazing.'"

Nobody but Joey saw the angel that day - except for maybe Bobby, who wasn't talking. If he had been, I know what he would have said: "It's the End Times, man!"

Youth: Why do you think that only Joey could see the angel?

Adults: Who is waiting for us at the end of time?

Prayer: Thank you, God, for meeting us and the end of our time. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

Republics of Central Asia

Come Out of the Darkness

by John McKee

Many centuries have passed
Since the creation of man
And we still haven't gotten it right...

We remain in the dark
Through our sinful behavior...
Found wanting in God's holy sight.

Just what will it take
For us to walk in the Light?
How long will God withhold his wrath?

He sent his Son, the Lord Jesus,
Here to save us from sin...
He is '...a Light unto my path'.

Mortal life quickly ends.
Vanishing just as a vapor...
And yet, many are oblivious to death.

Preferring darkness to Light...
Following vain evil lusts...
Until gasping their very last breath.

If you repent and accept Jesus
You shall surely be saved...
But unbelievers nurturing evil desire

With complete disregard
Of the warnings from Jesus
Shall be cast into the Lake of fire.

Jesus said watch for the signs
When he returns as a thief
In power and glory to claim his Church Bride.

He describes events to take place
Leading up to that day
When he calls us to come to his side.

"The harvest is plentiful
"But the laborers are few..."
Christ said to Disciples with him.

We're to witness to those
Who now walk in the darkness...
And take the 'Good News' of Jesus to them.

Let us join in prayer for:

Youth in the Church and the World

Telling Our Stories

by Jennifer Monroe

But I have had God's help to this very day, and so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. -Acts 26:22a

We had finally received an offer on our house. In the ultra-tight real estate market of the last year or so, that was no small miracle. But after our potential buyers had the house appraised, we realized we were going to have to spend almost \$2,000 to make some needed repairs. To us, that was a lot of money, money that we didn't have. We took some deep breaths, said some prayers, and started making plans to fix what we could. Two days later, we received a letter in the mail from some far away friends of friends, with a check for \$2,000. They had heard we were moving so my husband could go to graduate school and thought we might be able to use some money.

I love telling that story, because it reminds me every time of the fact of God's gracious, abundant provision. I get excited telling it and take every chance I get to testify to God's amazing love for me. The Apostle Paul is also a man with a great story to tell, and in the book of Acts it seems like he just can't stop telling it. His experience on the road to Damascus was so mind-blowing, so intensely life-altering that he just can't help but tell it, to anyone who will listen. In Acts 26, we read of him telling this story again, to a king in fact. He tells King Agrippa how he was a Pharisee of Pharisees, who went from persecuting the church to being its most prominent missionary, all because of a bright light and a voice and the experience of being blind and then being restored to sight. Paul is not at all shy about telling the story and he doesn't care who listens, "small and great alike." He speaks with the confidence that Agrippa himself will someday become a Christian, even if right now he remains unconvinced (see verses 28 and 29). This might be one of the best ways of sharing our faith with other people. Rather than being concerned about explaining all of the details of our faith or afraid that someone might ask a question that we can't answer, we can simply tell our stories, saying, "Here's what Jesus has done for me."

Youth: What is one of your favorite stories? What do you like about it?

Adults: What is your story? What has Jesus done for you?

Prayer: Jesus, we thank you for the great stories you write with our lives and the privilege of sharing them with other people. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

International Assistance Mission (Afghanistan)
Presbyterian Church of Vietnam

TUESDAY, AUGUST 25 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalm 54, 146

1 Kings 1:32-2:4

Acts 26:24-27:8

Mark 13:28-37

Psalm 28, 99

Thanks in Song

by Anne Price

The Lord is my strength and my shield: my heart trusts in him, and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to him in song. -Psalm 28:7

What does a heart leaping for joy look like for me? I have learned to accept changes in my plans as gifts from God to be joyful in all things. Today I drove to the park for Qigong at 6:00am and a rare rain canceled our practice. It was as if God told me to find a friendly Starbucks, take my writing pad and feel the energy coming from fellow coffee lovers.

The thanks I hear to him in song does not have to be sung in a certain key or melody, but from the joyful sounds of the lively staff as they take the requests from the guests with the first smiles of the day that many are receiving. Why don't I just drive up and get the coffee in my car? For the same reason I do not drive by our church to worship our father alone on Sunday morning. I sing much better with joyful voices around me.

At sunset out on the patio I hear the birds singing in their many tones. That to me, is their way of communicating to each other and I get to hear their music. Another of God's gifts to us.

As we sing in harmony with our Lord's chorus we will reap the rewards. Amen.

Youth: Do you feel God's presence when you turn off your iPod?

Adults: Can you meditate in prayer when you get away from electronic sounds?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to recognize the beauty in natural sounds including music. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

***Evangelical Fellowship of Cambodia
Evangelical Church of Laos***

Weathering Life's Storms

by Karen Foss

When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days and the storm continued raging, we finally gave up all hope of being saved. -Acts 27:20

Paul was on a ship heading for Rome. He was a prisoner at the time and had warned the centurion that it was not a good time to sail. The centurion didn't listen to him and they encountered a bad storm. Everything was lost, even the ship, but the people were saved. Paul had been assured by an angel of God that everyone would survive.

When I read this passage, I thought of the many storms we all weather in our lives. No one is immune from troubles. In today's world, there are so many challenges. Many people are facing unemployment, illness, death, divorce, or addictions. And this is just a short list. What storm are you facing right now?

Have you given up all hope or is your hope in the Lord? One of my favorite Scripture passages is Psalm 121:1-2,7-8, "I lift up my eyes to the hills—where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. The LORD will keep you from all harm—he will watch over your life; the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore."

It is very comforting for me to know that the Lord who put me here on this earth is taking care of me and watching over me. With him by my side, I can accomplish anything and weather any storm that comes along.

Youth: Are you facing something in your life that seems impossible to handle? Do you realize that you can turn it over to the Lord and he will help you?

Adults: Are you facing something seemingly insurmountable right now? Turn it over to the Lord and then listen to what he is telling you through the Holy Spirit.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, life is hard and we face so many challenges every day. Thank you for helping us and watching over us. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

The Synod of the Pacific (California, Idaho, Nevada, and Oregon)

THURSDAY, AUGUST 27 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalm 143, 147:12-20 1 Kings 3:16-28 Acts 27:27-44 Mark 14:12-26 Psalm 81, 116

Oh, for the Wisdom of Solomon

by Judy Williams

When all Israel heard the verdict the king had given, they held the king in awe, because they saw that he had wisdom from God to administer justice.

-1 Kings 3:28

Early in his reign as King of Israel after the death of David, his father, Solomon had a dream. In the dream, God promised to fulfill whatever request Solomon would make.

In answer to his request, God granted him the ability to have wisdom and discernment in administering justice.

Today's Scripture tells the story of Solomon's great wisdom in rendering a decision to settle the dispute between the two women arguing over which one was the real mother of an infant.

Real wisdom involves deeply understanding the heart of the matter. We look for wise judges in our courtrooms today. And we seek leaders for our church, our city, our state and our country who will discern the deep meaning before rendering decisions that will affect those under their leadership.

In Solomon's advice written in our Bible, he stresses that we must "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight." (Proverbs 3:5-6) He further wrote that "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding" (Proverbs 9:10).

Merely becoming educated in the world's ways, then, is not enough. To attain true wisdom means attaining discernment based on trusting God's guidance and leadership to make right judgments.

Youth: Will you remember that God will guide you when you are tempted to make a decision that is not wise? Will you pray for him to help you?

Adults: When you have a difficult decision to make, do you lean on your own understanding or do you trust God to give you the necessary wisdom to make the right choice?

Prayer: Author Marjorie Holmes offers this prayer given to her by a wise friend: "Jesus, stand beside me. Guide and direct my life. Teach me what I need to know. Help me with my work. Let me serve you and others, that I may be worthy of God's grace." Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

The Presbytery of Boise (Idaho, Nevada and Oregon)

Why is the PC(USA) Losing Members?

by Jerry Smith

In the four hundred and eightieth year after the Israelites had come out of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, the second month, he began to build the temple of the LORD. -1 Kings 6:1

I would like to share an experience I had visiting my daughter in Swannanoa, North Carolina. About one hundred yards from my daughter's drive was the First Presbyterian Church of Swannanoa. One Wednesday night, I decided to join them for Bible study. Upon arriving, I was handed a brochure of the church's history. The Church was 215 years old and in its fifth building. It had a number of distinguished members such as Dr. L. Nelson Bell, missionary to China, founder of *Christianity Today* and father-in-law to Rev. Billy Graham who was an occasional Sunday school teacher there. In their cemetery was buried Dr. Daniel Iverson, author of *Spirit of the Living God, Fall Afresh on Us* and the father of the man that led Esther and I to Jesus Christ.

The Bible study consisted of seven elderly ladies, one of which was the interim pastor, and myself. The study was from Acts 4:32-5-10. When the question was raised, "why did Ananias and Sapphira lie about the property they sold?" My answer was "Because they missed the prayer meeting in verse 31. After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly." My answer wasn't received with a great deal of enthusiasm. But here I was, worshiping in this beautiful church that could seat 500 people with a small group of believers and a total congregation of 48 members. They need our prayer and I would appreciate it if you would remember them in prayer.

My point is this, if we remove everything from our services of a divine nature or miracles or prayer meetings that not only shake buildings but that change the staid and solemn demeanor of our congregations, what do we have to offer the lost? No wonder that we have Presbyterians that no longer believe Jesus is the only way to God or that you can believe anything and still be ordained. We must preach of a loving God, who loved us so much that he sent his only Son to die for us. And we must lift Jesus Christ from our pulpits. But let us preach that God the Spirit is also part of the Trinity and was given to us so that the Father and Son could dwell in us and work their miracles through us.

Youth: What would you do in a prayer meeting that shook the building?

Adults: What would you do in a prayer meeting where everyone was filled with the Holy Spirit and proclaimed their faith boldly?

Prayer: Jesus keep us open to the Holy Spirit that you purchased for us through your righteousness. In your name we pray. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

The Presbytery of the Cascades (California, Oregon and Washington)

SATURDAY, AUGUST 29 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalm 122, 149 1 Kings 7:51-8:21 Acts 28:17-31 Mark 14:43-52 Psalm 100, 63

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by Ralph Comey

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still to come

Let us join in prayer for:

The Presbytery of Eastern Oregon

The Lord's Calisthenics

by Cheryl Moore

Train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come. -1 Timothy 4:7b-8

I take the martial art Taekwondo... I'm not in the best shape. Some days it takes me extra effort to get to class, let alone do the high rapid side kicks, knife-hand strikes, front jump kicks... you get the idea. The workout I get can be, well... physical! It's very hard training.

When my class is over, I feel good. My physical body feels refreshed, invigorated...like it's been challenged! But it's also a challenge to my mind; the moves must be perfected and executed to the standards set by my Korean Master. He is a strict but gentle teacher. Even when I stumble through doing the best I can, I love to hear him say "Good! You did well!"

I can say the same about my walk with Christ, except it's much sweeter! There are some days I don't feel "godly" and find prayer difficult, quite the "spiritual workout!" So, I press forward with my "godly training." I know my life needs to be lived according to the standards set by my true Lord and Master.

It can be hard, but when my task is over, I feel good. My spirit feels refreshed, invigorated...like it's been challenged! Jesus is a gentle teacher. Though I stumble through doing the best I can (I'm not in the best shape), I can't wait to hear him say "Well done, good and faithful Servant!"

Take care of your whole self, body, mind AND spirit! Your "whole self" belongs to God; you are merely the caretaker until God recalls his beloved treasure, YOU!

Youth: Are you eating healthy, exercising and getting enough sleep? Are you reading your Bible and talking to God through prayer every day?

Adults: Do your concerns about age, a good physique or appearances get in the way of a healthy relationship with Jesus? Do you set aside equal Prayer and Exercise time? Try praying while you are exercising!

Prayer: Lord, help us to value godliness above all else so that we may healthy in all ways; body, mind and spirit! In Jesus name we pray. Amen!

Let us join in prayer for:

Princeton Theological Seminary

MONDAY, AUGUST 31 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalm 62, 145

2 Chronicles 6:32-7:7

James 2:1-13

Mark 14:53-65

Psalm 73, 9

Faith is an Action Word

by Marie Ruiz

You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone.

-James 2:24

We are all called to put our faith into action. Sometimes we are called to step out of our comfort zone to do something for others less fortunate than ourselves or for those in need. That was the case when I went with seventeen other men and women from our church to Huechen Balam this past May to minister to a little village of Mayan people desperately in need of hurricane proof shelter. We placed the needs of others before ourselves in order to demonstrate to this Mayan village the love of God extended in the form of constructing concrete roofs, walls and floors for their houses.

Was it risk taking leaving our friends and family behind? Yes!

Was it hard work in relentless heat like many of us had never experienced? Yes!

Was there potential for injury and ill health, especially from the H1N1 flu? Yes!

But God - let me say it again - but God - went before us. He was well aware of the needs of those making this sacrifice and provided in every way.

What we experienced in return was the assurance that his grace is sufficient, a bold connection with people we'll never see again and a peace that passes all understanding. And above all a love displayed and extended to us from a community of people who did not speak our language but said in their expressions of hand and hearts extended, thank you!

Youth: Have you thought about ways you can do acts of kindness for others less fortunate than yourself? Talk to your parents about what you can do and pray to God for help and guidance in all that you do.

Adults: God has equipped every human being to be a light in this world and help others in need. Where are you demonstrating your light and being a help to those in need? Pray to God and ask his direction as to the work he would like you to do. We all can do something.

Prayer: Dear Lord, thank you for going before us in every situation looking out for our good, especially as we step out in faith to do good works for you. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

The Presbytery of Kendall (Idaho)

The Disciple, John

by John McKee

Saint John lived in Jerusalem
Until its destruction
In the year 70 AD by Rome...

He then moved to Ephesus
Where he pastored a church
In that city he was to call home.

He wrote the Gospel of John
And his three epistles....
Led to do so by Divine Inspiration.

Then wrote what he saw and heard
While caught up in the spirit
In the Bible's last book...Revelation

But before he met Jesus
John fished for a living
Upon the Sea of Galilee.

Partnering with his three brothers
The four learned to fish
From their father, Zebedee.

As soon as Jesus called them
To be his Disciples
They immediately decided to trade

Their careers on the water
To serve the Lord Jesus...
A decision they all joyfully made.

Through his three years of Ministry
They followed the Savior
Eagerly seeking to serve and to learn.

And Jesus loved the Disciples
Whom he was to choose...
All but Judas loved him in return.

But the 'Beloved Disciple'
Of Christ Jesus was John,
Most Theologians believe today

Who was told by Lord Jesus to...
"Behold your mother..."
As his mortal life ebbed away.

He alluded to Mary, his mother,
Who was standing with John
In the crowd below his wooden cross...

Both wept sad tears of anguish
As he tenderly held her
To console her during this time of loss.

When Jesus gave up the Ghost
They laid his lifeless body
In Joseph of Arimathea's new tomb...

Where he remained for three days
Until his resurrection,
Leaving only his shroud in the gloom.

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