



NORTHMINSTER  
DAILY DEVOTIONS

OCTOBER 1-31, 2009 VOL. 36 NO. 10

# ***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](http://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, November 1, 2009.*

Cover image: chapel in the Ozarks

***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.***

## ***Crowds Were Amazed at His Teaching***

by Ralph Comey

*Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock ... But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. -Matthew 7:24-26*

The above passage is taken from the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus' familiar collection of teachings which is at the heart of his message concerning the Kingdom of God. The teachings cover a wide spectrum of spiritual topics and include guidance on human conduct. Even though they were delivered 2,000 years ago in Galilee, they transcend time and place. These teachings are so universal in scope and so true that they could have been spoken to us yesterday.

A few years ago, I had a chance to practice one of his teachings and to discover its surprising power. A public housing project which I had designed was now under construction. As supervising architect, my role was to insure that the proper quality level was being maintained, and I was able to do this. Unfortunately, the general contractor had bid too low and was losing money. He tried to cut corners and later submitted claims for extra money and blamed me for his problems. His claims were untrue and I was able to refute them. After the project was completed, the contractor was sued by one of his subcontractors. Sheepishly, he asked me to testify. I agreed, overlooking his former slander, because I thought his position was correct. He was dumbfounded and overjoyed, because he had not expected this. My testimony helped him win the case.

**Youth:** Do you sometimes wonder what to do? In living your life, follow Jesus' teachings and you never will go wrong.

**Adults:** Have you studied the Sermon on the Mount? It presents a marvelous blueprint for living, but many of its teachings are not easy—turn the other cheek, love your enemies, do not judge and you will not be judged, and so on. Nevertheless, we should try to do our best. Jesus tells us that we will be richly rewarded.

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, help us understand the Sermon on the Mount and follow Jesus' teachings. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for ***the National Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Guatemala***, see page 277 *Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study*.

# *He Brought Me Out*

by Marie Ruiz

*He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the LORD. Many, O LORD my God, are the wonders you have done. The things you planned for us no one can recount to you; were I to speak and tell of them, they would be too many to declare. -Psalm 40:2-3,5*

When I was a little girl from the time I can remember, my parents would dress me and my brothers in Sunday clothes and we'd all go to church together on Sunday morning, Sunday night and usually a Wednesday evening Bible study class. One of the things I remember very distinctly about the church services we attended was the hymn singing. They were hymns that described some of the pitiful states we were in before confessing our sin. One of them is *He Brought Me Out*. This hymn is no doubt based on Psalm 40:

My heart was distressed 'neath Jehovah's dread frown,  
 And low in the pit where my sins dragged me down  
 I cried to the Lord from the deep, miry clay,  
 Who tenderly bro't me out to golden day.  
 He bro't me out of the miry clay, he set my feet on the Rock to stay;  
 He puts a song in my soul today, A song of praise, hallelujah.

The congregation sang with such fervor because their conversion was something that they could not accomplish. Only God could have saved them from their sin. And the new path that they now walk is far from what they could have ever imagined. Their praise in song was genuine, heartfelt and spoke to me as a young girl. Their testimonies have remained in my mind.

**Youth:** Can you think of a hymn or song that you sing at a church or youth group that helps you to understand the Bible?

**Adults:** Hymns are a great testimony of faith. What is your favorite hymn?

**Prayer:** Thank you, Lord, for the gift of music and the vast resource of hymns that help us commit Bible truths to memory. Thanks for those who have labored to write down music and words for us to sing and play. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for *the Central American Evangelical Center for Pastoral Studies*, see page 278 *Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study*.

## SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3 LECTIONARY READINGS

Ps 63:1-11

2 Kgs 19:21-36

1 Cor 10:1-13

Mt 8:18-27

Ps 125:1-5

# ***Temptations***

by Jerry Smith

*No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.*

-1 Corinthians 10:13

Temptations are something we are all subject to and we must, therefore, know how to deal with them. The first thing we must understand is that they do not come from God, “for God does not tempt anyone” James 1:13. Since temptations cause us to sin we know they are the tools of the devil! Since God said he would provide a way of escape (NKJ) let us look at one of the ways he provided. In Ephesians 6:11, he tells us, “Put on the full armor of God so you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.” This all inclusive armor is found in the same chapter, verses 14 thru 18.

Putting on the armor is just the beginning. Like any good soldier you have to practice with these weapons. Practice using them to determine how you are going to defend yourself in areas where you know your weaknesses exist. Whether it’s a loose tongue, drinking, smoking, pornography, eating, church attendance, hey, you know what your weaknesses are, just don’t sit back and say, “Oh, I’ll fight that battle when it comes up,” because when it comes you won’t be prepared. Our tempter is a “wily devil” who will hit you at your weakest point. So be prepared as Jesus was and slay him with the Word of God.

**Youth:** Are you prepared to fight the tempter with the armor provided by God’s Word?

**Adults:** Since there is never a time when we are safe from the tempter, are you prepared to fight him with the weapons God has provided?

**Prayer:** Father, we are so thankful for the weapons you have given us and the best of all is Jesus, our savior, who told us, “in this world you will find tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” In Jesus’ precious name. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for ***the Reformed Calvinist Church of El Salvador***, see page 279 *Presbyterian Church (USA)’s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study.*

## ***The Widow's Son***

by John McKee

After Jesus had healed  
The centurion's servant  
He went to a city called, Na'in.

A great crowd followed him  
With his Disciples,  
And as they approached the gate to go in,

A procession of mourners  
Was coming slowly towards them  
With a man who'd died being carried ...

Jesus had great compassion  
For the man's weeping mother  
As her only son was to be buried.

**"Do not weep."** Jesus said,  
Touching the bier,  
As the bearers all stood very still

**"Young man,** Jesus commanded,  
**"I say to you arise."**  
And the dead man obeyed the Lord's will.

When Jesus gave back the son  
To his joyful mother,  
The entire crowd was stricken with fear

"A great prophet has arisen among us!"  
"God has visited his people!"  
They exclaimed around the now-empty bier.

The news spread like wildfire  
Through the whole of Judea  
Of the miracle that had just taken place...

That Jesus had raised  
A widow's son from the dead  
Through the power of his holy grace.

Let us join in prayer for **World Communion Sunday**, see page 280 *Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study*.

## MONDAY, OCTOBER 5 LECTIONARY READINGS

Ps 5:1-12

2 Kgs 21:1-18

1 Cor 10:14-11:1

Mt 8:28-34

Ps 82:1-8

# God's Warranty

by Karen Foss

*The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. The LORD is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made. All you have made will praise you, O LORD; your saints will extol you. They will tell of the glory of your kingdom and speak of your might, so that all men may know of your mighty acts and the glorious splendor of your kingdom. Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures through all generations. -Psalm 145:8-13a*

Are you tired of those annoying phone calls that tell you that the warranty on your car is about to expire? You know the ones! You can never talk to a real person to tell them to quit calling you.

So many of the products we use today have warranties that are good for only so long before you must renew them. Isn't it reassuring to know that God's dominion endures now and through all generations? This is why we must pass on the good news to our children and grandchildren. I am always heartened to see families sitting together at church. It is so *right* that they worship together and the parents are setting the best example for their children to follow. That old saying that "the family that prays together, stays together" is so true.

**Youth:** Do you sometimes grumble that you have to get up early to go to church on Sundays? How do you feel after spending the morning there?

**Adults:** Are you doing your part to pass down the good news that we get only through God?

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, you *are* gracious and compassionate and rich in your love for us. Let us be good stewards and pass that goodness down to our children and grandchildren. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for *the Presbyterian Church of Honduras*, see page 281 *Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study.*

## ***Faith Healing***

by Anne Price

*Jesus stepped into a boat, crossed over and came to his own town. Some men brought to him a paralytic, lying on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven." -Matthew 9:1-2*

The Jewish religious leaders thought it blasphemous for Jesus to claim to forgive sins, but they also considered it just as impossible for him to heal the paralyzed man. So by doing the impossible, healing the paralytic, Jesus made it clear to his critics that he also had the power to forgive sins. This truth should give us the courage to turn to Jesus for help. As God's own Son, he has the power to offer forgiveness and recovery to all who trust in him. The faith of the men who carried him as well as the faith of the paralyzed man is to be noted.

I know that I do not have all the answers to life's questions. I think of the time my late husband was severely hurt in a motorcycle accident. He had believers across the country praying for his healing. Yet, he did not live. I was in an accident a few years ago and was like the paralyzed man on the mat, unable to move. Prayers from believers, including many from our church, prayed for me. I am up and about living a full life. I don't know why he did not live and I did. However, I will not give up praying for others' healing.

Jesus told the paralytic to get up and walk. His sins are forgiven. No more needed to be said.

**Youth:** Have you ever prayed for someone you love to get well?

**Adults:** Have you felt the love of others as they pray for your healing?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus Christ, I come to you for forgiveness for my sins as I accept your healing power. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for ***the Council of Evangelical Churches of Nicaragua***, see page 282 *Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study*.

## ***What Will You Decide?***

by Judy Williams

*As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. -Matthew 9:9*

From the gospel writer himself we have this account of the moment Matthew decided to follow Jesus to become one of the twelve. There was apparently no hesitation on his part to leave his lucrative position as a collector of taxes for the Romans in Capernaum. Rather, Matthew tells us that he got right up and followed Jesus.

Then, as now, people who find themselves in circumstances of sinfulness long for a better way. There was something about Jesus that captured Matthew's attention and would bring a radical change in the way he lived his life.

The Scripture goes on to relate that Matthew invited his friends and "fellow sinners" to eat a meal at his home where Jesus could share his message of salvation with them as well.

Again and again I have heard the words "Follow Me" echoing in my heart.

I long to obey and bring others to know the truth that God offers all who believe in Christ's sacrifice on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins.

An anonymous hymn-writer penned the following words:

*I have decided to follow Jesus; no turning back, no turning back.*

*The world behind me, the cross before me; no turning back, no turning back.*

*Though none go with me, I still will follow; no turning back, no turning back.*

*Will you decide now to follow Jesus? no turning back, no turning back.*

**Youth:** There are many decisions to make in the days and years ahead. What do you think is the most important decision you will ever make?

**Adults:** How have the decisions you have made in life affected you? Have you made the decision to follow Jesus without turning back? What does this mean for you?

**Prayer:** Jesus, we want to be your true followers in every sense of the word. Help us to be steadfast in our decision to trust in your grace. Guide our steps and show us the way every moment, we pray. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for ***the Presbyterian Church of Costa Rica***, see page 283 ***Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study.***

## *Spiritual Gifts*

by Jennifer Hager

*Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.*

*-1 Corinthians 12:7*

In John 14, Jesus promises the Holy Spirit to the disciples. In verse 16, Jesus says, "And I will ask the Father and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever." Jesus explains more about the Spirit in verse 26: "But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you."

This is Christ's great promise to the disciples (and to us) that though He cannot stay with them, the Spirit will come and be with them always.

In the key verse for today, Paul writes to the Corinthians about the gifts that the Spirit gives us, so we have a further understanding of the role the Counselor plays in our lives. Jesus told us the Spirit teaches and reminds us. Paul tells us the Spirit gives us gifts.

The gifts are many and are manifest in many ways: wisdom, knowledge, healing, miraculous powers, prophecy, speaking in tongues and interpretation.

Verse 7 in 1 Corinthians introduces these gifts. But I think the very key to the understanding of the gifts we are given lies in the phrase "for the common good."

Our gifts are given for God's use in his kingdom. The gift of knowledge cannot be manifest in anyone unless the gift is freely given for the good of all in God's work. Of what use is healing if it is kept to oneself and not worked in the lives of others?

Let us use the gifts of the Holy Spirit to advance God's kingdom.

**Youth:** How can you use your gifts and talents to help others?

**Adults:** Have you asked the Lord to reveal to you how you can use the gifts and talents the Holy Spirit has given you?

**Prayer:** Almighty God, thank you for the gifts you have given me. May your will be done in my life, Lord, so that I may use these gifts to your glory. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for *the Presbyterian Reformed Church in Cuba*, see page 284 *Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study*.

## Greater Honor

by Cheryl Moore

*The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty. -1 Corinthians 12:21-23*

Honor. Some of us may have forgotten the meaning. I looked up the definition in *Webster's Dictionary* and took the meanings I felt applied here:

- a person of superior standing
- an evidence or symbol of distinction
- a keen sense of ethical conduct

I think Paul was trying to tell the Corinthians, be mindful who you honor and "work together." He uses a "parable" type story of a "body" to show how "diversely different" parts come together for one purpose. The seemingly less significant parts of the whole, we adorn with expensive decorations (the synonyms of "decorate" in the third sense were: honor, honour, reward, grace. Wow!

Today in our 'societal body', we elevate the undeserving to great stature! Our children think its okay to emulate their behavior because we have "clothed them with great honors"! Instead of treating sin as something to shun... we hold sinful things in high esteem. It's hard for us, let alone our children, to know when right is right and wrong is just plain wrong! "I cry to you, O LORD; I say, 'You're my refuge, my portion in the land of the living'" Psalm 142:5.

"... God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member" -1 Corinthians 12:24.

So what society sees as "inferior," the "body" of Christ (us) should give great honor to it! Goodness, prayer, righteousness, forgiveness, love and even life itself should all be held on a pedestal, not the evil that permeates our media. Jesus should be our main focus and given highest honor above all!

**Youth:** What do you choose to honor: our country's flag, the Cross, your Bible?

**Adults:** Who do you teach your children to honor: a fallen soldier, a grandparent, a firefighter ... Jesus?

**Prayer:** Father, please help us to remember to honor you above all! In Jesus name. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for ***the United Church in Jamaica & the Cayman Islands***, see page 285 *Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study*.

## ***The Pursuit Of Love***

by Jerry Smith

*If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.*

-1 Corinthians 13:1-3

The pursuit of love becomes imperative to a Christian when you reflect on the above Scripture. Petersen, in the Message, states it this way, "Go after a life love as if your life depended on it—because it does" 1 Corinthians 14:1. Jesus said, "A new commandment I give you that you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men shall know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

If love is so important, how do we get it? Is it something we can get through our own efforts? We know that Galatians 5:22 says it is listed as the first fruit of the Spirit. But the Scripture that I think says it best is Romans 5:5, "... because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us." I could go on and hit you with a blinding flash of the obvious, but I believe you can figure it out for yourself. Just remember the pursuit of love is not an option we Christians can debate.

**Youth:** How would you pursue God's love?

**Adults:** Do you understand how important it is to live in God's love?

**Prayer:** Father, we are so thankful that you did not give us the Spirit of timidity, but the Spirit of power, of love and of self discipline. In the name above all names, Jesus Christ, the lover of our souls. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for ***the Presbyterian Hunger Program***, see page 286 ***Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study.***

## ***All Alone in the Dark***

by John McKee

All alone in the dark ...  
Separated from God ...  
With no hope of being saved,

Is the fate of all those  
Who scoff at redemption ...  
Who lead lives that are terribly deprived.

They have all here on earth  
They could possibly want  
Great wealth, perhaps power and fame.

But are sadly lacking  
In the one thing they need ...  
An acknowledgement from whence it all came.

God does not get the credit  
For the things he has done  
Nor for the bountiful things they've been given.

They focus solely upon  
Their own self-centered lives ...  
It's by material things that they're driven.

It soon comes to an end ...  
We must give it all up ...  
We'll take nothing away from this earth.

We will face final Judgment ...  
All will answer to God,  
Regardless of our former net worth.

Give your life to the Lord...  
There's no time like today,  
This is just too important to wait ...

Invite the Lord Jesus  
To come into your heart,  
For tomorrow it might be too late.

Let us join in prayer for **HIV/AIDS Awareness**, see page 287 *Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study*.

## ***Love is All Things***

by Karen Foss

*If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.*

-1 Corinthians 13:1-3

I have been so blessed in my life to have loving people around me. They have helped me so much and made my life easier in the process. I can only hope that I have returned some of that love.

Love is one of the main themes of the Bible. We all have some sort of spiritual gift, but it produces nothing without love. When I think of the mission trips that the adults and young people of the church have taken on, I know that they could not be accomplished without the love and dedication of these people. The teachers and volunteers in the preschool demonstrate their love daily.

Love is demonstrated in so many ways. This past summer I had the faith that I could learn to drive my motor home. Faith that I could do it was one thing, but I needed help. With the love, patience and help of my brother-in-law, I did drive to California and made it just fine.

**Youth:** Have you recognized your spiritual gifts? When you do them, do you do it out of love?

**Adults:** Where do you fit into the church community? Is there something that you could do that would help others?

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, thank you for your love and help me spread that love in everything I do. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for ***the Dominican Evangelical Church***, see page 288  
*Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study.*

## Today's Prophets

by Anne Price

*Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy. -1 Corinthians 14:1*

In a few words this verse is a heavy assignment for us today. A revelation by divine inspiration from God is what it says to me. I used to believe that the Prophets were all from the past and once the Bible was completed, limited man could not have the gift.

If we look at the prophecies as strength, encouragement, comfort and edifying God, we can see how it can apply to our lives today. The spiritual gift of prophecy is never to be misused, envied or cause separation from God. There have been many times that I have been awakened from a deep sleep with a dream that told me to take some action that my conscious mind had not even considered. It was for my good and for the benefit of others. When I prayed and knew that the inspiration was from God, I would act upon it. Were these prophetic dreams?

When I look at our team of pastors, I see that they preach the message of Jesus Christ and do nothing to promote division within the church. Are they today's prophets? They may have the gift. May we use any gifts of prophecy that God has given us to show the love God has to others.

**Youth:** How do you show others the love God has for you and for them?

**Adults:** Have you been led with God inspired thoughts and acted upon them?

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, may we recognize that you still offer the gift of prophecy to your people. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for ***the Presbyterian Church of Trinidad and Tobago***, see page 289 *Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study.*

## ***Mortgage Officers***

by Dale McArthur

*Who lends his money without usury and does not accept a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things will never be shaken. -Psalm 15:5*

It is so seldom that an old retiree is exposed to the high world of finance that a recent experience was quite a reward. In a time when many families are worried about their job, their mortgage, and keeping their homes, the following experience was rewarding.

By coincidence, I found myself as best man to an eloping couple that got married in California. She was our neighbor at one time, sold her house, and moved into the house of her new husband. Consequently, we had not seen her for several months and decided to make a visit to her office which was nearby. Not knowing the type work that she did, we were surprised to find that she was one of those executives with a corner office on a third floor of a very prestigious company. Her desk was covered with sales contracts on foreclosed homes—I mean dozens of them. Each one was a story in itself but being concluded with a sale to a new owner. We were unaware of the volume of high finance of this marketplace where interest rates, closing dates, and money, were the tools of the transaction. It was quite an eye opening experience.

Recently our financial institution invited us to an open house where we renewed acquaintance with the mortgage loan officer that handled our transaction. She was dealing at the local level as the front line contact of people really in trouble with their mortgages. She was dealing with many of the new government programs coming out, trying to help people in trouble and she was also trying to protect the institution from having its treasury looted.

Two different mortgage officers at two different parts of our financial world but both of them tried to live up to our Scripture about not loaning with usury. Both of these ladies probably leaned heavily upon their faith as they were involved deeply in the lives of families. These times are a critical time in all of our lives where our faith needs undergirding with the scriptures and God's Word for everyday living. However we relate to the commercial world, there is strength in our living by letting God help us.

**Youth:** The amounts might be smaller, but they affect all of our lives in equal amounts of pain or pleasure. Are you careful about your finances?

**Adults:** If we haven't been doing it, let's reinvent the family counsel so that we are all aware of our family financial condition.

**Prayer:** Lord, help us realize your guidance to live life and to help each other survive difficult times. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for ***the Presbyterian Church of Venezuela***, see page 290 ***Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study.***

## Jeremiad

by Jennifer Monroe

*So they took Jeremiah and put him into the cistern of Malkijah, the king's son, which was in the courtyard of the guard. They lowered Jeremiah by ropes into the cistern; it had no water in it, only mud, and Jeremiah sank down into the mud. -Jeremiah 38:6*

Jeremiah, yelling from the bottom of a musty old cistern: Hey. HEY! Anyone? Can anyone hear me? It's me! The prophet? Jeremiah? Hello-o? I'm down here, at the bottom of this well. It really stinks down here and I'm waist-deep in mud. This is really the limit, you know? You've plotted against me, slandered me, had me beaten, put me in the stocks, put me in jail, accused me of wanting to defect to the Babylonians, and now, NOW, you're not even men enough to kill me. You just stick me down here and hope that I'll starve to death. I'm just doing my job, you know? I'm just telling it like I hear it from the Lord. It's not like I could make this stuff up. Believe me, if I could, I would tell you all exactly what you want to hear—rainbows, flowers and sunshine, joy, love, and peace for all. If it were up to me, I'd be known as the giggling prophet or the happy, skipping, singing prophet, not the weeping, gloom and doom prophet. It's not my fault that I have to tell you things that you would rather not hear. They're God's words, not mine.

And while I'm on the subject, God, this is a really great way to treat your servant, you know? In case you haven't noticed, I'm currently down at the bottom of a well, sinking into mud up to my armpits, and food is getting scarce. Is this what you meant in your job description by "prophets must have an excellent work ethic, be flexible, and willing to work long hours for little or no pay?" I'd consider handing in my resignation, only I don't have any idea where I'd send it. Mr. Wishy-Washy Himself, Mr. So-Afraid-Of-His-Own-Officials-That-He-Can't-Even-Stop-Them-From-Putting-A-Prophet-Down-A-Well King Zedekiah is up there right now, probably eating figs and drinking wine and having a high old time, while I'm stuck down here! See if I ever pass along your great words of advice again. How are you going to ... Wait a minute. What's that? A rope?

**Youth:** Have you ever felt completely abandoned by God and other people? How did that feel?

**Adults:** With whom do you identify more in this story: The king who wanted to ignore what Jeremiah had to say, or Jeremiah, who was punished for doing the right thing?

**Prayer:** Almighty God, please give us the courage to always say the words that need to be said, and to listen when you speak to us. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for *the Presbyterian Church of Columbia*, see page 291 *Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study*.

# ***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 **World Food Day**, see page 292 *Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study*.

# Lord, Make Me Your Capstone

by Jennifer Hager

*The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the LORD has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes. -Psalm 118:22-23*

*Webster's New World Dictionary* (1968—from high school!) defines capstone as “the uppermost stone of a structure” and “the highest point, as of achievement”.

The psalmist uses the beautiful metaphor of a capstone to praise the Lord for his work in our lives. The builders in this world have rejected a stone that the Lord, in his infinite wisdom and grace has made into the capstone. The rejected is the uppermost in God's kingdom. The stone the world turned away has reached the highest point in our Lord's purpose.

We all struggle daily with the judgment of the world. We are rejected and even reviled sometimes because our lives are different from “theirs.” We are assured of God's love for us and in our hearts we know he is with us. But the world's efforts to tear us from him are unrelenting.

This passage provides us with the reason we resist and fight the world and its evil. While we may be rejected by the world, the Lord will use us for his capstone. What an amazing grace!

**Youth:** Do you feel alone sometimes and afraid? Remember that the Lord will make you his capstone.

**Adults:** Do we ask the Lord to relieve us from today's burdens, knowing that his plans for us are mighty?

**Prayer:** Almighty God, thank you for being my rock and redeemer. May I do your will always so that I can fulfill your plans for me. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for *the Evangelical Presbyterian & Reformed Church in Peru*, see page 293 *Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study*.

## ***A Place to Call Home***

by John Charles Cheek

*This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: "Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce." -Jeremiah 29:4-5*

I moved to Tucson at the end of December 1973, so I could attend the spring semester at the University of Arizona. Tucson didn't seem like home to me. Everything was different. Traffic was completely out of control. And perhaps most difficult for me, nobody knew me, or my family, or my story. I felt very much like a stranger in a strange land, and I couldn't wait to leave and find a place more like home.

Now I've been here for over 35 years. I've worked, made and lost friends, and built several gardens. Tucson is home, and I hope to live here the rest of my life. What a difference a few decades can make!

God's promise to those in exile in Babylon was that he would bring them home. In the meantime, though, they were to settle in Babylon, make lives there, and seek prosperity, not only for themselves but for their temporary home. May we know, in the deepest part of ourselves, that God will bring us home to him. And may we seek and find peace as we sojourn here.

**Youth:** Think about a time when you were really homesick. What did you do?

**Adults:** Think about a time when you felt like a stranger in a strange land. How did you feel?

**Prayer:** Lord, may we always know that, as long as you are with us, we are at home. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for ***Domestic Violence Awareness***, see page 294  
*Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study.*

## *Plans to Prosper*

by Cheryl Moore

*“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. -Jeremiah 29:11-12*

My dog and I were taking a walk one evening, down a very straight, narrow sidewalk. Nothing was blocking our path and we went along at a pretty good pace. Next thing I knew, my dog had led me, unknowingly, off the sidewalk into a deep dry wash. I got out, with great difficulty, and he ended up falling back in and looking up at me with his sad puppy eyes, as if crying out “Now what, Mama?”

I knew there were dangers down in that wash, I could see them ... I knew my dog couldn't. I had to go down through the dangers to save him. After a struggle, he relaxed because he knew and trusted me. I got him back up to the top and back on the straight path again. I did not want my family's beloved friend harmed!

I thought about what had happened; it reminded me of Jesus. He came down and faced the dangers to save us. Sometimes we stray from the path that God has lovingly set before us to keep us safe and happy. We might even put ourselves in harms way. We should never be afraid to call out of the wilderness, “Now what, Father?” When we know and trust him, he will hear our prayers; he will answer in a way that will be best for us... He can see the whole picture! He is our hope and purpose!

“I cry to God most high, to God who fulfills his purpose for me” - Psalm 57:2.

**Youth:** Who do you ask for help when you feel lost or confused?

**Adult:** Are you struggling with a tough situation? Do you call upon the Lord when something is blocking your path?

**Prayer:** Father, help us to remember to call on you when we feel hopeless or lost. You alone see the path ahead and have plans to give us a future full of hope and prosperity! We thank you! In Jesus' precious name. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for *the Independent Presbyterian Church of Brazil*, see page 295 *Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study*.

## ***A Test of Our Character***

by Dick Leon

*Then Agrippa said to Paul, “Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?” Paul replied, “Short time or long—I pray God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains.” -Acts 26.28-29*

World peace may rest on this telling question: “How do we treat people who are different from us?” Global Culturalism and Tribalism threaten to do us all in.

I see three options in history: extinction, exclusion or engagement. The extreme of extinction is seen in horrendous acts of “ethnic cleansing” for people on the outside to “honor killings” for those inside our circle!

Another strategy is exclusion. We can choose to create a space between ourselves and others who are different. Some traditions call this “shunning.”

Paul sets the right example for us with Agrippa. It is the choice of engagement. He talks with him and testifies to his faith and prays that in some way Agrippa will become a believer!

We have an even better model of dealing with people who are different in faith or morals or education or social status or ethnicity it is to note what God has done. Here is the compelling truth: “While we were yet sinners Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). God did not count all our rebellion, defiance, distrust or just plain indifference to him as a reason to wipe us out or exclude us from his attention. He came to us while we were still far away!

I think this single issue is one of the most telling marks of our Christian faith: treating people who are outside our circles of love and identity with genuine respect! How we regard those who are “different” is a test of our Christian character and a pathway to world peace besides!

**Youth:** How do you resist the easy habit of respecting only people who are like you?

**Adults:** How would you score for your regard for people outside your circle?

**Prayer:** Lord, as you loved us when we were far away, help us to respect those who are different from us as evidence of our Christian character. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for ***the United Presbyterian Church of Brazil***, see page 296 ***Presbyterian Church (USA)’s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study.***

## ***Unlikely Neighbors***

by Dale McArthur

*His pleasure is not in the strength of the horse, nor his delight in the legs of a man; the LORD delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love. -Psalm 147:10-11*

It seems my workshop has always been a gathering place of the neighborhood. With the garage door open, it seems inviting for the people walking by to come in and have a cup of coffee. It has been this way wherever we have lived. In one neighborhood I looked up from my work to see a young man coming into the shop, obviously not feeling well and came over to me sobbing, needing a hug and telling me he was entering drug rehabilitation and would not see me for a while. He was a broken down body builder and drugs were destroying him and it was apparent he was on a right course.

Another visitor was a frail lady in her seventies who had seen a lot of the world in her professional life and was not coping too well with the world as she saw it today. She exhibited a strong faith and was using it as she attempted to help many people in the community.

Fast forward several months and a young man has returned from rehab, has a good job, has returned to body building and is outgrowing his clothes with muscles. He seems to be coping with the world and his circumstances without the need for drugs.

We still see the frail lady but it is obvious her strong faith keeps her working and helping others. We often wonder how neighborhoods develop such divergent types of people and could it be that God places these examples before us to help us realize the value of the Scripture message. So as we travel through life and meet all different kinds of people, we could realize that in God's plan each one has his place in relationship to other people.

God creates all different kinds of people to add beauty to our neighborhoods. They are like a bouquet of different flowers. Wouldn't it be sad if there were only flowers of one color to choose from?

**Youth:** It takes all different kinds of people to fill the positions on an athletic team—enjoy the differences.

**Adults:** Families are made of all different kinds of people—thank God for his varied gifts.

**Prayer:** Thank you, Lord, as we stand in awe of your creation. Help us enjoy it and be good stewards of your gifts. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for ***the Independent Presbyterian Church in Bolivia***, see page 297 *Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study*.

## Today's Devotional

by Scott Coverdale

*Teach me to do your will, for you are my God. Let your good spirit lead me on a level path. -Psalm 143:10*

Here is a bit of transparency from a Northminster devotional writer: As I was selecting a verse to contemplate for this devotion, I was looking at the passage from Ezra chapter one. In these verses, it tells about what the Jews were able to take back from exile with them to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple. In verses 9-11, it gives an inventory of the gold and silver hardware that they took along with them. It lists the 2,499 items, then says that the total was 5,400. My lesson from that was going to be that we should not do the math with the Scripture—that we should be looking at it for its revelation about God, and not for its mathematical precision.

Then I thought further about that, and it occurred to me that this lesson about analyzing Scripture might be interesting, but it is not devotional. It might be worth trying to figure out, but it is not something to carry with me through the day. I went on to read other passages from today's reading and came to the verse written above, "Teach me to do your will, for you are my God. Let your good spirit lead me on a level path." This is what I need to carry with me through the day. Regardless of my analysis of Ezra's inventory, I need to be listening for the voice of God today, teaching me to seek and obey God's will, leading me on a level path. That path will take me across the paths of many of my neighbors, the people who I live close to in my community, the people who I meet by God's design or by happenstance. And those people do not really care about how many gold vessels Ezra put in his pickup truck to carry back to Jerusalem. They need to know that they are loved by God, that they are created with purpose and meaning, and that they are precious in God's sight—more precious than silver goblets and gold bowls.

**Youth:** Have you ever seen people argue about things that are really not important, and then miss the important things? Tell about that.

**Adults:** What is God's will for you today? Where will God's good spirit lead you today?

**Prayer:** Thank you, God, for caring enough to teach me. Please give me an attentive ear to hear the leading of your good spirit today, and give me courage to follow that leading wherever it may go. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for ***the Presbyterian Evangelical Church in Chile***, see page 298 *Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study*.

# ***Are You Shining for Him?***

by Marie Ruiz

*Praise him, all his angels, praise him, all his heavenly hosts. Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars. -Psalm 148:2-3*

The word star in our Bible is used in different contexts, from describing the Godhead to celestial planets and to human beings. It is an interesting word; although most of us think of stars visible in the night that illumine the sky, the Bible speaks of us as shining lights that we are to those around us when we praise the Lord audibly and through the life that we live.

Praise to the Lord throughout creation in the form of hills, mountains, seas, animals, etc. cannot compare to the light that you and I are called to emit when we live lives that are a praise to God. Philippians 2:15-16 says we will shine like stars in the universe when we hold out the word of life. This word of life is the praise and adoration we give to God by living for him. Our living praise speaks to those around us of life that is incomparable, everlasting and shines brighter than any star in the heavens.

It is impossible to be in an attitude of praise to God if we aren't connected to him daily. The efforts we make to walk close by his side, reading his Word, and communing with God through prayer and our fellow Christians is the preparation for our praise. How bright is your star? Does praise flow from your lips about the incomparable Christ that has rescued you from sin and given you the assurance of eternity? We can certainly praise God for his indescribable gift!

**Youth:** We are called to shine like stars. Do you know what that means? Ask your parents to explain this to you. You can be a shining witness for Christ.

**Adults:** No more than any other time like the present do we need to shine brightly for him. Would you think about how you can shine the light of Jesus to those around you?

**Prayer:** Bright and morning star, we give you praise for the light you have given to each of us. Help us to shine brightly for you. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for *the Evangelical Institute for Higher Theological Studies and the Waldensian Evangelical Church of the River Plate*, see page 299 *Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study*.

## ***When Do You Shout for Joy?***

by Dick Leon

*Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. 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. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations. -Psalm 100*

I remember when our kids were teenagers and they took up skiing. Carolyn and I had not been into this sport before, but when your kids want to do it and need a ride to the mountain ... well, it is good to get involved.

On one trip up to the mountains, we had a caravan of three cars, all filled with kids dying to get on the slopes. After three hours in the car they were eager to go when we slid into the snowy parking lot. As soon as the kids got out of the car, they let out this great shout of excitement and joy. Their shouts of joy rang all over the mountain. It was fun and it was contagious.

Since that day I have wondered how many of us utter shouts of joy when we get to the church parking lot on Sunday morning? Actually, it seems awfully quiet in our lot. But, to be fair, we are Presbyterians! So, what can you expect?

I doubt that this little devotional will generate great shouts of joy in our parking lot tomorrow. But I would like us all to reflect on where our hearts are when we worship. Do we sing the songs and hymns with joyful hearts? Is praise to the Lord bubbling up from deep inside us as we worship the Lord? Are we really glad to gather in worship and to praise his name?

We may be a bit over-restrained as Presbyterians in our outward expressions of joy and praise, but I bet we can all do better in our heart of hearts as we gather to worship and we are reminded over and over again that "The Lord is good, and his love endures forever!"

**Youth:** How do you feel about worship?

**Adults:** What would it take to improve your inner attitude toward worship so your heart sang for joy when you came to church each week?

**Prayer:** Gracious Lord, forgive us for being much too cavalier toward worship each week. Give our hearts a fresh song of joy in our worship this week. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for ***the Presbyterian Church in Canada***, see page 300  
*Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study.*

**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 25 LECTIONARY READINGS**

Ps 108:1-13

Hg 1:1-2:9

Acts 18:24-19:7

Lk 10:25-37

Ps 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 **Reformation Sunday**, see page 301 *Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study*.

## ***Mile and a Half***

by Scott Coverdale

*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*

In my younger days, before I had my own car, I did a bit of hitchhiking as an economical and sometimes adventurous way to travel. One winter morning around 4:00am, my travels found me dropped off on I-70 in Denver. It was snowing, I didn't really have a good sense of where I was going, and the panel truck that I had been riding in since the middle of Kansas had large holes in the floor and no heater.

I started walking south through a rather tough-looking neighborhood. As I passed a certain drinking establishment, four rather tough-looking hoodlums surrounded me. There was no indication that they were the Hospitality Committee, and I will admit that I was feeling a tad threatened by these men. I politely asked permission to continue my way southward. Instead of obstructing my way, they began to escort me along the dark sidewalks. We walked together for about a mile and a half, passing through several even rougher neighborhoods. I was maybe a little uncertain about how fond my company was of me, but I also felt quite sure that nobody else was going to give me any trouble as long as I had them with me.

When we contemplate the power of God, the fact that God can make and unmake anything at all, that there is no standing in the face of God's majesty and authority and holiness, we just may feel a little intimidated. We are wise to feel overwhelmed by the transcendent God of All. But there is something else, too: God is loving. God is on our side. God knows the darkness that we walk through, knows the streets, knows us, has our well-being in mind and is completely trustworthy. When we realize that God loves us, it transforms our perspective completely.

**Youth:** Can you think of a time when you had someone really strong on your side? How did that make you feel?

**Adults:** How does God's love for us affect how the world looks?

**Prayer:** Dear great God, thank you for being at our side, for your love through all of the dark streets that we may find ourselves walking. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for ***the Synod of South Atlantic***, see page 302 *Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study*.

## ***Giving Credit Where Credit is Due***

by Jennifer Monroe

*You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.*

*-Revelation 4:11*

On my living room wall hangs a series of framed photographs of beautiful grey mountains, blue waters, and green pine trees. Periodically, people will comment on the pictures, remarking on how much they like them. Whenever that happens, I can't help myself. I simply have to respond, "Thank you so much! My husband took them!" Because he was the one with the talent, the eyes to see the pictures' potential, and the ability to take into account light, angles, composition, and color in order to create lovely photographs, I want him to receive the glory for his work.

In my experience, this is often the case. Compliment someone on a hand knit sweater or a homemade piece of pottery, and often, they'll want to tell you who made it and something about him or her. The better they know the person, the more they'll have to tell. Their response might sound something like this: "Oh, my mom made me this quilt! She spent six months working on it in the evenings—she's really quite talented. See these stitches? They're almost perfectly even and all done by hand!" We want to make sure that the credit goes where it's due. Is the same true when it comes to our Creator? The Book of Revelation says that God alone is worthy of praise, glory, honor, and power because he is the one who not only created everything, but also sustains it, keeps it going. It is important to remember that nothing should take his place in our regard and nothing else deserves God's glory, honor and power. Money did not make us, neither did fame or prestige or athletic ability or intelligence or good looks. All that we have, we have been given. We ourselves are the creation of a good God and our very lives ought to be a testimony to the skill, creativity, and greatness of our Maker. The better we know him, the better we will be able to give him praise.

**Youth:** Has anyone ever given you a handmade gift that you really treasured? What did the gift teach you about that person?

**Adults:** The next time you receive a compliment, how can you direct the praise to the person to whom it is rightfully due?

**Prayer:** Creator God, we praise you because we are fearfully and wonderfully made. You are worthy to receive all glory, honor and power. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for ***the Central Florida Presbytery***, see page 303 *Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study*.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 28 LECTIONARY READINGS

Ps 96:1-13

Ezr 6:1-22

Rv 5:1-10

Mt 13:10-17

Ps 132:1-18

## ***Give Thanks to God***

by John McKee

It's Somewhat normal  
To become apprehensive  
Upon reaching one's twilight years,

But our appreciation for everything  
We have been blessed with,  
Will help overcome all those fears.

The family love that we treasure,  
Mostly taken for granted,  
And also the love of good friends,

Are God's wonderful gifts  
Which cannot be purchased,  
But are favors he graciously sends.

The beautiful skies that he colors  
Each dusk and dawn ...  
The four seasons we enjoy all year-round,

Are more gifts from the Lord  
We should give him thanks for,  
As his blessings upon us abound.

When we offer him thanks  
And live life to the fullest ...  
When we enjoy all that God sends our way.

He continues to shower  
Priceless blessings upon us  
And all of our loved ones each day.

Let us join in prayer for *the Charleston-Atlantic Presbytery*, see page 304  
*Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study.*

# ***My Friend is Worthy of My Praise***

by Judy Williams

*Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice they sang: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!" -Revelation 5:11-12*

Jesus is the Lamb of God. As this passage from the Book of Revelation shows, he is truly worthy of our praise.

From early memories of knowing Jesus as my Savior, I have come to think of him as my friend and confidant, my teacher and guide, my joy and healer, my shepherd and refuge. In other words, he has been a very personal reality in my life.

Perhaps I have become a bit selfish in claiming my friendship with him.

Today's passage from Revelation has made me readjust my focus to realize that all the heavenly hosts consider Jesus to be worthy of their great adulation. He is not just *my* friend, but he is available to *all* of God's creation!

There is a balancing act we should remember:

While we focus on Jesus as our friend, we must recognize the power and glory that are due him and give him praise for that. And while we focus on his glory and power, we must remember that he is truly our trusted friend.

A good reminder for me is in the familiar hymn, *How Great Thou Art*.

*And when I think that God, his Son not sparing,  
sent him to die, I scarce can take it in,  
that on the cross, my burden gladly bearing,  
he bled and died to take away my sin.  
Then sings my soul, my Savior God to thee:  
How great thou art, how great thou art!*

**Youth:** Will you thank God today for sending his son to be your friend? And can you tell others about Jesus' love for you?

**Adults:** Can you see yourself in the vision described in Revelation's passage today, singing with all creation in praise of Jesus?

**Prayer:** Dear Father in Heaven, lead me today to realize anew that you deserve all praise and honor and glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

Let us join in prayer for ***the Cherokee Presbytery***, see page 305 *Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study*.

## Looking for a Blessing?

by Dick Leon

*Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked. For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless. O LORD Almighty, blessed is the man who trusts in you. -Psalm 84:10-12*

What are your Sundays like?

There are more choices to make for how we spend the Lord's Day than ever before in our history. At one time you could say that church was about the only thing going on Sunday mornings. Today that is no longer true. The soccer fields are full, the casino lots are full, the golf courses are full, bike paths are crowded. And then, of course, there is the universal option taken by many of remaining between the sheets of the church of the inner springs!

Think about worship for a moment. Is there anything else in our weekly routines that carries the power to enrich our lives, deepen our faith, strengthen our sense of security, enhance our identity as a child of God and connect us with our Heavenly Father and fellow believers? In worship we are brought to a fresh awareness that life is a gift of God and God is good!

We all would like to be blessed—that is, to be recipients of spiritual gifts that fill our hearts with joy and our minds with peace. The psalmist reminds us in today's text that all who put their trust in the Lord are blessed!

Makes us wonder why we ever miss worship, doesn't it!

**Youth:** Think about your normal weekly activities and ask yourself "is there anything in my week, other than worship, that reminds me that God is good and God loves me?"

**Adults:** How committed are you to worship each week? Do you build your weekly schedule around the richness of worship or have you left worship to the mercy of everything else?

**Prayer:** Great Lord, thank you for setting the weekly rhythms of life around one day when we can gather to sing your praises, hear your fresh Word of grace, gather with others in our faith family and receive your blessing. Help us to make *your day* of the week the *main day* of our week, every week! Amen.

Let us join in prayer for *the Flint River Presbytery*, see page 306 *Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study*.

# ***The Kingdom of Heaven***

by John McKee

We inherit the Kingdom of Heaven from God  
 And not from our fathers or mothers  
 We will reap the rewards of eternity with Christ  
 Due to our faith and not that of others.

It just isn't enough to be a "good person."  
 That will not get us through heaven's gates.  
 We must believe in him for eternal life  
 Jesus Christ in John 3:16 states.

It's too much of a gamble to put off committing  
 Our lives to him until tomorrow.  
 The many lost souls who have died in their sins,  
 Now face an eternity of sorrow.

Although believing Jesus to be the Son of God  
 Is the only criteria we need  
 For eternity in heaven with the King of kings  
 Our faith rarely goes without deed.

When we make a decision for Christ in our lives,  
 Our hearts overflow with joy.  
 We look for good deeds we can do for the Lord;  
 Eager to be in the Savior's employ.

As the Lord sees the love burning deep in our hearts,  
 He will lead us to do his good works.  
 Not for our glory, but for the glory of God  
 To save souls from the Devil who lurks.

Sometimes the Lord's work is arduous and long  
 But more often the tasks are quite fun.  
 It doesn't matter which jobs we are given to do,  
 We benefit in the long run.

"The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few."  
 Jesus said in Matthew 9:37.  
 It's incumbent upon Christians to help spread "The Word"  
 To win souls for his Kingdom in heaven.

Let us join in prayer for ***the Presbytery of Florida***, see page 307 *Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study*.

# ***Books of the Bible Abbreviations***

## **Old Testament**

Genesis - Ge  
Exodus - Ex  
Leviticus - Lv  
Numbers - Nm  
Deuteronomy - Dt  
Joshua - Jo  
Judges - Jgs  
Ruth - Ru  
1 Samuel - 1 Sm  
2 Samuel - 2 Sm  
1 Kings - 1 Kgs  
2 Kings - 2 Kgs  
1 Chronicles - 1 Chr  
2 Chronicles - 2 Chr  
Ezra - Ezr  
Nehemiah - Neh  
Esther - Est  
Job - Jb  
Psalms - Ps  
Proverbs - Prv  
Ecclesiastes - Ecc  
Song of Solomon - Sol  
Isaiah - Is  
Jeremiah - Jer  
Lamentations - Lam  
Ezekial - Ez  
Daniel - Dn  
Hosea - Hos  
Joel - Jl  
Amos - Am  
Jonah - Jon  
Micah - Mi  
Nahum - Na  
Habakkuk - Hb  
Zephaniah - Zep  
Haggai - Hg  
Zechariah - Zec  
Malachi - Mal

## **New Testament**

Matthew - Mt  
Mark - Mk  
Luke - Lk  
John - Jn  
Acts of the Apostles - Acts  
Romans - Rom  
1 Corinthians - 1 Cor  
2 Corinthians - 2 Cor  
Galatians - Gal  
Ephesians - Eph  
Philippians - Phil  
Colossians - Col  
1 Thessalonians - 1 Thes  
2 Thessalonians - 2 Thes  
1 Timothy - 1 Tm  
2 Timothy - 2 Tm  
Titus - Ti  
Philemon - Phlm  
Hebrews - Heb  
James - Jas  
1 Peter - 1 Pt  
2 Peter - 2 Pt  
1 John - 1 Jn  
2 John - 2 Jn  
3 John - 3 Jn  
Jude - Jude  
Revelation - Rv

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