



NORTHMINSTER
DAILY DEVOTIONS

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Northminster Devotionals

May these devotionals be a blessing to you as we are guided through the daily Scripture readings from the *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! We welcome any feedback you'd like to share. Please send any comments to jpeck@npctucson.org.

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! Have a story to share but don't feel you can write it up? Contact us and we will have one of our talented writers contact you and ghost-write it.

Also, you may be interested to pair your devotional reading with daily readings from the Presbyterian Yearbook for Prayer and Study (a valuable resource since 1892) which is viewable online at www.pcusa.org/missionyearbook/. Once you are there, you may sign up to receive daily reading via daily email, RSS feed or podcast. This is a great way to pray for our denomination and its Christian witness around the world.

The next issue of the Northminster Daily Devotions will be available on Sunday, November 29, 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.

Worry Contest

by Dale McArthur

Then Jesus said to his disciples: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear." -Luke 12:22

This is the season of the year when our pro football teams have completed their training and the real games are beginning. The training camps were there to prepare the teams to perfect their skills and get their bodies in shape for the battles to come.

The Gospel of Luke records a large section where Jesus instructs his disciples and followers about the problem of *worry*. I wonder, were there training camps to teach people how to worry? They seem to be very good at it and their skills have been exhibited by his followers for some two thousand years. It seems to have been a big problem in the time of Jesus.

In the twelfth chapter of Luke, Jesus identifies the many areas of life that are being damaged by too much worry. It would be helpful for each of us to identify the areas of our own lives in which we spend too much time in applying the trade of worry. It could be job, children, mortgage payment, self-esteem, or many other topics but it is assuring to know that Jesus has a cure for this problem. Verses 29 through 31 contain the solution to our worry problem: "And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. But seek his Kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well."

Are you still in camp or are you playing the game?

Youth: Practice makes perfect but do you know anybody that is perfect in the game of worry?

Adults: There's a difference between thoughtful planning and worry. It would be helpful to teach our children the difference and observe it in our own lives.

Prayer: Thank you, Lord, for the lessons of the Gospels that can be applied in everyday living. Your teachings are relevant today. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for **Christian Citizenry** (page 308 of the *Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study*).

Extreme Makeover: Temple Edition

by Jennifer Monroe

With praise and thanksgiving they sang to the LORD: "He is good; his love to Israel endures forever." And all the people gave a great shout of praise to the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid. -Ezra 3:11

I love imagining this scene, as described by the author of Ezra. In my mind's eye I see the temple priests in their rich vestments, brightly-colored and intricately embroidered, playing loud silver trumpets. I see the Levites, the temple's servants, banging together large bronze cymbals. I imagine the Israelites, those returned to their homeland from Babylonian captivity, crowding around, eager for a glimpse at the magnificent sight. They are laughing, talking, shouting with joy. There are huge choirs of people, dancing, their arms raised to heaven, singing at the tops of their lungs: "HE IS GOOD; HIS LOVE TO ISRAEL ENDURES FOREVER!" In another corner of the scene there are groups of old men and women, their faces creased with memory and longing. These people are weeping loud wailing cries, the tears streaming down their faces. "These stones," they are saying to one another, "Who would have ever thought that we would live to see these stones raised again?" The entire picture is noisy, chaotic, ceremonial, busy, joyous, and melancholy, all mixed together.

And what is all this noise about? The Israelites' beloved temple is to be rebuilt again, fifty years after the Babylonians demolished it. The remarkable thing is that the cause for this raucous celebration is not the completion of the temple's "extreme makeover" but rather the laying of the foundation, the very beginning of the process. In contemporary reality show language, this is not "the reveal", the moment of the show when people get to see the gloriously restored building in all of its splendor and marvel at the "before" and "after" pictures. This is the very beginning, the first step down a very long road, and yet it signals hope to the people. Perhaps, in our own fast-paced, twenty-first century world, we can get so impatient to see finished products that we don't take the time to notice and celebrate God's faithfulness at every step, even before we can see what the end will look like. Rather than just saying, "Thank you, Lord, for helping us finish," we can all learn to say "Thank you Lord, for helping us begin."

Youth: Can you think of a project you've had to work very hard on? What did it feel like to begin? To end?

Adults: Is it hard to be thankful at the beginning of a long project? Why?

Prayer: Almighty God, thank you for being the Lord of endings and beginnings, of starts and finishes. Help us to be grateful to you, every step of the way. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for ***the Foothills Presbytery*** (page 309 of the *Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study*).

For Those Who Are Bowed Down

by Dick Leon

He upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets prisoners free, the LORD gives sight to the blind, the LORD lifts up those who are bowed down ... -Psalm 146:7-8

Many years ago I heard a lecture by a religion professor from Harvard. That in itself makes someone perk up on the assumption that this is going to be good! And it was!

His question for us was this: "What is the one thread that runs through stories in the gospels that seems to make people open to the Lord?" And his answer was simple, "They all had an awareness of their neediness."

This may not be good news to our comfortable and affluent American culture! We don't do well admitting neediness! Even if we are hurting we answer the question of "How are you doing"? with a brave "Very well, thank you!"

Somehow neediness in our world has become wrongly equated with failure, and that is always hard to talk about. Actually, being needy need not be a sign of our failure at all, but rather just a mark of what I call "Christian Realism." By that I mean simply, we are all needy!

Have you ever wondered why the Lord, who loves us with the most uncommon love anyone could imagine, took the commandments of God and made them harder? He extended "you shall not kill" to the level of just being "angry" with a brother or sister!! He extended "you shall not commit adultery" to the level of looking with lustful eyes!! Ouch! Is anyone not in trouble with those words?

I think he does this to help us all see that there is a deep level of neediness in us all that we cannot fix on our own. He wants to drive us to God's grace where we find the forgiveness, companionship, healing and uplift that alone makes us whole and well and content and fulfilled!

It is to those who are bowed down that the Lord does his "lifting!"

Youth: Is it hard for you to admit your neediness?

Adults: When did you first realize that you needed God's grace in your life?

Prayer: Gracious Lord, your love for us is beyond our deserving and beyond our imagining. And yet, Lord, we know it is real because when we come to you with our broken lives you do not cast us away or tell us to clean up our act before approaching you. Thank you for loving us so much that even when we were sinners you came to us, died for us and welcomed us home! Amen.

Let us join in prayer for ***the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta*** (page 310 of the *Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study*).

Deception

by Cheryl Moore

But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him. -Revelation 12:8-9

Have you ever walked through the church when it is empty of its people? I get two feelings; Peace ... and sadness. Peace comes because I can be alone with God but Sad because his house is ... well ... empty!

Our society today spends a lot of time trying to convince us we don't need God. "You can just rely on yourself! You don't need a 'crutch'! God is a 'fairy tale' we use to scare children! God has too many rules; you can't live up to his kind of perfection!" They spend a lot of time convincing people of something that is wrong! This is called deception. I did not realize how much the Bible says about it!

- who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world
- the pride of thy heart hath deceived thee.
- and deceive not with thy lips
- be not deceived: Evil companionships corrupt good morals.
- be not deceived, God is not mocked...
- wherewith he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast...
- let no man deceive himself (most important!)

There were so many more but...you get the picture. Jesus made it clear to us in the end times we must "Take heed that no man deceive you" and "And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many"

Now, more than ever, we must focus on God's word, not man's word! Remember Romans 16:18- "For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple." Hmmm The Bible is the only "Truth" you need to hear!!

Youth: Do you let rumor and gossip deceive you? Where do you go for the truth?

Adults: Do you believe wonderful speeches and flowery words or hard-hitting gut wrenching Biblical Truth??

Prayer: Father, please protect us from deception, open our eyes to the truth of your love, grace and forgiveness. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for **the Presbytery of New Harmony** (page 311 of the **Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study**).

Boundaries

by Scott Coverdale

The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance. -Psalm 16:6

There are more than one way to look at boundary lines. They restrict our movement, and we may have a natural tendency to resent them. I think that in our current society, boundaries are thought of in a negative light. Why should we not live in total freedom? Why should there be restrictions on us, and how can we be happy if there are things that we are not allowed to do or be? We are, after all, Americans, rugged individualists doing as we please in the Land of Freedom and Choice and Opportunity. What kind of a boundary could we ever want?

My own experience, though, is that people want boundaries—people want to know the parameters of life. People, including myself, want this, because we sense that a lack of boundaries leads to chaos and a lack of meaning. Consider the Ten Commandments. What is the effect of conforming to these instructions? Far from imposing drudgery, abiding by these rules lends order and security to society. Consider Jesus telling us that we are to learn to love God and for that love to permeate our relationships with our “neighbors”, all those who dwell around us. The effect? Restriction and repression or beauty and goodness? In a way, God’s Law is a boundary, but the effect of the boundary is always to our own benefit. It is a boundary less like a fence to keep us away from the good land, but more like a fence to keep us out of the tar pits. God knows us, along with our tendency to get ourselves into stupid situations. God loves us, and knows the conditions necessary for us to thrive and find real freedom and joy. Hence the boundaries, but always in the right places.

Youth: Can you think of some examples of rules that are really intended to keep us safe and that are not just there to keep us from something good?

Adults: Is there an area of your life in which you are trespassing a boundary that God intended for your good? How can you cross back to the right side of God’s will for you?

Prayer: Thank you, God, for caring enough about us to give us instructions on how to live well, in goodness and freedom. Please teach us to trust your boundary lines, and the goodness in which you establish them. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for ***the Northeast Georgia Presbytery*** (page 312 of the *Presbyterian Church (USA)’s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study*).

Infinite Compassion

by Judy Williams

And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. -Matthew 14:19-20

Immediately before Jesus performed the miracle we read about in today's passage, he had received the grim news of the death of John the Baptist.

Scripture tells us that his reaction was a desire to withdraw by boat to a solitary place to be alone in prayer.

However, crowds of people heard that he was in the vicinity and when he got to the shore and saw them, "he had compassion on them and healed their sick."

After he had spent some time tending to the needs of the people, Jesus' disciples began to urge him to send the crowd away as evening was drawing near and there was very little food available. Jesus simply told them to feed the crowd themselves! Even though five loaves and two fish could never fill more than 5,000 hungry stomachs, obediently they gave the bread and fish to Jesus and scripture tells us that they were able to feed everyone with 12 basketfuls of leftovers!

Only after this day filled with compassion and miracles did Jesus manage to find the solitude he had sought earlier in the day. To me, this event is just a foretaste of Christ's message to us, that he truly is the "bread of life." If we trust and obey his word, he will provide all the care and compassion we will ever need and there will be plenty left over.

Youth: Do you know deep inside that God will always take care of you if you trust and obey Him?

Adults: In spite of all the problems the world holds for you, can you trust God to provide all you need?

Prayer: Loving Father, we thank you for sending your Son to illustrate your care and compassion and infinite provision. Help us accept and appreciate your love. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Let us join in prayer for ***the Peace River Presbytery*** (page 313 of the *Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study*).

When God Calls

by Anne Price

When I called, you answered me; you made me bold and stouthearted.

-Psalm 138:3

How do I call out to God? Is it in a loud voice for others to hear? Do I speak silently in my mind knowing that he hears me wherever I am?

I was raised as an only child by loving grandparents. We would sit in our den and read books from Jack London, Mark Twain, and Charles Dickens among others. This was before television took the place of quiet family reading at night. I was taught that God was everywhere, so when I would go out by myself in my sand pile garden I would talk to Jesus. He was my imaginary friend. I was never lonely. When I made friends with the neighborhood kids and schoolmates I did not talk too much to Jesus. People took the place of my special relationship with God.

However, over the years life has brought me many of the challenges that you probably have also experienced. I have called out to God thousands of times. Sometimes he answers me in a dream. He also sends me his representatives with skin on to teach me what I need to know.

Maybe as a reader of this devotional, you are being sent to answer someone else who needs to be heard. As we pray for our walking orders from God, do we just know what we must do? Do we wonder where the ideas come from?

Is God calling us to service?

Youth: Do you hear God speaking to you when you are quiet?

Adults: Where do we feel God communicating with us? Does it help when we turn off external noises?

Prayer: Father, May I hear your voice answering my call to you. I want to hear you when you speak to me. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for *the Providence Presbytery* (page 314 of the *Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study*).

Turning Hospitality Upside-Down

by John Charles Cheek

Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous." -Luke 14:12-14

One of the truly eye-opening aspects of my seminary experience was learning that each of the Gospel writers wrote to emphasize a different aspect of Jesus and his ministry. Luke, I was taught, tells us in his biography of Jesus of the way Jesus takes the conventions of the day, and particularly the conventions of honor and shame, and turns them upside-down. Luke describes "social inversion" in his Gospel.

"Social inversion" means that all the standard rules of who is in a position of honor (wealthy people, significant people in the community, religious leaders) are overturned. The people who had the least honor (sinners, the unclean, women) are lifted up and honored in Luke's Gospel.

In today's teaching, Jesus says that the ordinary guest list for a banquet has it all wrong. The people who should be invited are precisely those people a proper host would avoid at all costs, all those people who can't possibly benefit the host in the least. The only reason to invite them is to show real generosity and hospitality.

Jesus turns our world upside down. The things we most need (reconciliation with God, salvation) are the very things we can't possibly earn or deserve. And then God gives them to us freely. May God be praised for grace and love.

Youth: Think about a time when you were nice to someone other people were teasing or making fun of. Do you think God was pleased for what you did?

Adults: What are the ramifications of social inversion for you? Who are the people you could be showing honor and hospitality to?

Prayer: Lord, teach us to love as you love us. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for **Stewardship** (page 315 of the *Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study*).

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 9 LECTIONARY READINGS

Ps 135:1-21

Neh 9:1-25

Rv 18:1-8

Mt 15:1-20

Ps 97:1-12

All is Well

by John McKee

Upon reaching the goal
Of the life everlasting...
Upon achieving this ultimate prize...

We'll sing praises to God
For at last...all is well
As he wipes every tear from our eyes.

When we're welcomed to Heaven
By Lord Jesus and hear,
"Good and Faithful servant ... well done."

He'll give a Crown of Life to us
For our fidelity and say...
"All is well, child ... your race has been won".

When we see our dear loved ones
Who crossed over before
Run to greet us with arms open wide...

Reveling in their embrace
We will know ... all is well.
And forever more with them we shall abide.

Our imperishable new bodies
Will never grow old,
Nor ever become ill or feel pain...

We'll give him thanks forever
Praise his name ... all is well
For bringing us home to remain.

As we sing with his angels
Praising God's holy name
For the sacrifice of his only Son...

We sing our praises to him
Hallelujah ... all is well!
Laud and honor to the Three in One.

Let us join in prayer for *the Presbytery of St. Augustine* (page 316 of the *Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study*).

Speak to Me, O Lord

by John McKee

As I listened for God
In the midst of the storm
He was nowhere to be found in the wind...

Yet, from within my heart
My God comforted me...
He's my Rock upon whom I depend.

After the wind had abated
An earthquake began
But the Lord God was not in the quake...

As it broke rocks to pieces...
And split gaping fissures
Causing everything near it to shake.

Following the earthquake
A fire consumed and destroyed...
But my God was not in the fire.

After the fire in the silence,
Came his still, small voice
To instruct ... to give hope ... to inspire.

Speak to me, O Lord,
This wretched, unworthy sinner
That Satan tries so hard to snare.

Calm my troubled heart...
Grant me your perfect peace
That soothes away my every care.

Speak to me, O Lord,
I pray for your instruction
Each minute of each hour of each day.

I seek your unerring guidance
For you are the Potter...
And I, Lord...I'm only the clay.

Speak to me, O Lord,
Let me hear your still voice
Over the thundering roar of life's storm...

Guide me by your Light
Through this vile, evil world...
Keeping me and my loved ones from harm.

Speak to me, O Lord
You're my God and my King...
Before the world I shall never deny it...

Here am I, Lord, your servant...
Listening in the silence...
For your small voice so soft and so quiet.

Let us join in prayer for **the Savannah Presbytery** (page 317 of the *Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study*).

Our God Forever

by Jennifer Hager

For this God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even to the end.

-Psalm 48:14

In this world, we all wear many hats. We identify ourselves to others as a “teacher”, a “mother”, a “banker”, an “attorney.” We use our professions and our avocations as a means to help others identify us and get to know us.

How many of us tell others: “I am a child of God. He is my God forever?” What will our identity be then? Who or what is our master? We are silent sometimes about our “affiliation” with Christ Jesus. Is our silence born of fear of what others might think? The psalmist writes of God’s all powerful presence in the world. In verse 4-5 “the kings joined forces ... they fled in terror.” In the third verse, the psalmist writes of our God’s omnipresence in the world. “God is in her citadels; he has shown himself to be her fortress.”

God’s greatness is manifest in everything of this world. Let us come to him in thanksgiving and acknowledge that we are his. Let us step out in faith and make it known that we are the Lord’s.

Youth: Do you know that God is your God? Ask him to show you his greatness.

Adults: Do our friends and acquaintances know that we are God’s? Do we tell them and show them that our relationship with Jesus is our first identity?

Prayer: Almighty God, heavenly Father, you are our God. Please let us obey your guidance even to the end. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for *The Presbytery of Tampa Bay* (page 318 of the *Presbyterian Church (USA)’s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study*).

How Much Evidence is Enough?

by Dick Leon

“A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah.” Jesus then left them and went away.

-Matthew 16:4

Jesus is addressing the Pharisees and Sadducees who had come to “test him.” He calls them both wicked and adulterous, and if we think carefully about those descriptions, they very well may fit all generations, even ours and even us. We are all broken people from what God has designed and intended for us and in that we share in the marks of wickedness. And we all are inclined to put other lesser gods before the Lord in our lives and in that we share the mark of spiritual adultery!

Jesus wants us to know that we ask too much when we keep asking for another sign to “prove” that God exists, or God loves us, or God is on our side

Bertrand Russell, who did not believe in God, was once asked: “So, what will you say if you die and are confronted with your Maker?” His reply is also a complaint: “I should say, Oh God, you did not give us enough evidence.”

Really? What do we want for evidence? Must it be so compelling that we have no choice left? Wouldn't that contradict one of the primary marks of being human, our freedom to say 'no' even to our Maker? If God came with such force that we were all 'forced' to believe in him we would be his followers by compulsion not by choice and there would be no love in that relationship at all.

Pascal, more wisely than Russell, notes that “There is enough light for those who want to believe and enough darkness for those of the opposite disposition.” We have enough evidence in the life, teaching, death and resurrection (the sign of Jonah!) to know that God is, that God is love and that God is supremely on our side.

As Pascal notes, the deeper issue is one of our heart. Are we inclined to believe in God or not? On that issue hangs the sufficiency of God's “evidence.”

Youth: What 'sign' do you need from God to bring you to faith in him?

Adults: What 'signs' were enough for you when you came to believe in Jesus?

Prayer: Great God, you have broken into our world in the person of your Son so that we may have sufficient evidence that you exist, that you love us and that you are on our side, and we thank you that you have done this in such a way that we freely choose to follow you. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for ***the Trinity Presbytery*** (page 319 of the *Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study*).

Who Do You Say That I Am?

by Jennifer Monroe

Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

-Matthew 16:16

Jesus asks: "Who Do You Say That I Am?"

A wise teacher? An ancient fool? A charismatic leader with a Messiah-complex? A myth? A failed revolutionary? A demoralized idealist? A figment of our collective imaginations? A problem? A healer? A preacher? A magician? A lunatic? An ego-maniac? A symbol? A founder of a religion? A manipulator of men? A good example? A humanist? A politician? A piece of ancient history? A fake? A prophet? A legend? A guide? A benign father-figure? A heretic? A socialist? A popular Rabbi? An ordinary carpenter? A gifted orator? A cheat? A beautiful idea? A drug? A superhero? A first-century freedom-fighter? A stumbling block? A fad? A nice guy? A counselor? An enigma? A tool? A star shining with the universal light that lives within us all? A man who represents one way up the mountain to the summit of truth?

or:

God himself, walking around in human flesh. The Messiah of Israel, whose purpose it was to take the punishment for the world's sin upon himself, to die for that sin and to conquer death by being raised again. The Christ, the Son of the Living God.

Your answer makes all the difference in the world.

Youth: Who do you say Jesus is?

Adults: Who do you say Jesus is?

Prayer: Jesus, not only do we confess along with Peter that you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God, but we declare that you are God, and that you are worthy of all our praise. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for ***the Presbytery of Tropical Florida*** (page 320 of the ***Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study***).

Rebuking is Never Pleasant

by Marie Ruiz

Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!" Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men." -Matthew 16:22-23

These words in Scripture are sometimes hard to read. Can you imagine Peter's face when our Lord turned to him and said "Get behind me, Satan!" OUCH! And yet that is exactly where that comment came from. Peter didn't want harm to come to Christ and that was admirable, but he was not understanding of the will of the Father in sending his Son to earth. You see, Peter was not looking at the big picture. He was living in the now. Peter had baby faith and needed God's teaching for Peter's trust and faith in what was to come. Although Peter walked and talked with Christ, his tunnel vision made it impossible for Peter to see beyond the present in that situation.

But let's not be too judgmental of Peter. We all have fallen short; because we reside in a weak and frail body, it is easy for us to lose track of the promises in scripture when we consider things through the eyes of our world.

We have all been rebuked for things we have said and done that were wrong. While rebuking is never pleasant, it should cause us to take pause and make right the things that are wrong.

For all of Peter's frailties, God promised Peter and the other disciples a throne in heaven and the inheritance of eternal life. Lord help us to consider the big picture when we are tempted and remember this world is not our home.

Youth: When your parents discipline or correct you how do you feel? Sometimes although we may feel crushed, we know that correction helps us make right choices in the future.

Adults: Can you think of a time when God convicted you in your spirit because of an action or deed that was wrong? Did you confess your sin before God?

Prayer: Lord thank you for discipline that helps set our path straight and aligns our vision for eternity. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for ***the Synod of Southern California and Hawaii*** (page 321 of the Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study).

The Early Travels of Jesus

by John McKee

He left his home-town of Nazareth,
Which is in Galilee,
When he was about thirty years old.

Near Bethany-Across-the-Jordan
He was baptized by John
As his ministry began to unfold.

Within the Judean Desert
He went into the wilderness
Where he faced the Devil's temptation...

He was exhausted and hungry
After forty days of fasting ...
Quite weakened by this deprivation.

Satan departed when Jesus
Did not yield to temptation
Although weak, he was able to resist...

Angels ministered unto him
Until he regained his strength...
Guardian Angels God sent to assist.

In his quest for Disciples,
Jesus called four fishermen
As he walked near the Sea of Galilee

The first two chosen were brothers
As were the next two to join them
When he said to the men, "Follow me..."

They proceeded northward to Galilee
To attend a wedding in Cana
Where, miraculously, he turned water into wine.

With his mother and siblings...
They went on to Capernaum
And all stayed there for just a short time.

Traveling south to Jerusalem
To celebrate the Passover
He angrily cleansed God's Holy Temple

By driving out the money-changers
With a whip made of cords...
His intent was to set an example.

They left there for Judea
Where he baptized believers...
While John was baptizing near Salim.

Traveling on to Samaria,
Christ met 'the Woman at the Well'...
Who was made a believer by him.

Because of her testimony
Many Samaritans were converted...
Still more after they'd heard Jesus preach.

Two days later with Disciples
He came again back to Cana
For the many there he wanted to reach.

An official begged Jesus
To save the life of his son
Who lay ill while his family all grieved.

The Lord said to the man,
"Go, your son will live."
Then he and his entire household believed.

Let us join in prayer for **Caregiver Sunday** (page 322 of the *Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study*).

The Book of Life

by Jerry Smith

The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. -Revelation 20:13-15

If I told you that I understood every thing that is contained in the above Scripture it would be a bald-faced lie. But I do understand the importance of being written in the Lamb's Book of Life and the significance. Yes, imagine the utter horror of not having your name found there. When the seventy two messengers returned to report the success of their mission to Jesus, he responded by saying, "However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in Heaven." -Luke 10:20.

So how do we get our names in the Book of Life? "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him [and keeps on believing in him] shall not perish but have eternal life" John 3:16. Seems too simple. But without Jesus you are here ----- and God is here.

That chasm between you and God is the Valley of Death and the only bridge across that valley is Jesus Christ. No effort by man will get you there. So it's up to you. You either accept Jesus and all he has done for you or, burn, baby, burn.

Youth: When the choice is so obvious, why are you waiting?

Adults: Eternity is now, why haven't you gotten on board?

Prayer: Father, we are so thankful that you sent your Son that none need perish. We pray that they will heed the call. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for **the Hanmi Presbytery** (page 323 of the *Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study*).

He is My Strength

by Karen Foss

Praise be to the LORD, for he has heard my cry for mercy. 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. The LORD is the strength of his people, a fortress of salvation for his anointed one. -Psalm 28:6-8

I suspect that a lot of you are just like me. When I am faced with adversity, the first place I turn is to the Lord. My heart *does* trust in him. I AM helped. He *is* my strength. What in the world do people without faith do in such situations? I've asked myself this question many times and have not come up with an answer. Just being a believer gives me strength and I am able to think with a clear head. Because my heart trusts in him, I know that he is with me always and will not fail me. Like everyone else, I've had my ups and downs but I know I can trust in my God to see me through the tough times.

Youth: Who do you rely on for strength when the going gets tough?

Adults: Are you facing adversity in your life? Turn your heart over to God and he will help you through the rough times.

Prayer: Dear Lord, You are my salvation and I will praise you with word and song all my life. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for ***the Presbytery of Los Ranchos*** (page 324 of the *Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study*).

Fishy Money?

by Jerry Smith

After Jesus and his disciples arrived in Capernaum, the collectors of the two-drachma tax came to Peter and asked, "Doesn't your teacher pay the temple tax?" "Yes, he does," he replied. When Peter came into the house, Jesus was the first to speak. "What do you think, Simon?" he asked. "From whom do the kings of the earth collect duty and taxes—from their own sons or from others?" "From others," Peter answered. "Then the sons are exempt," Jesus said to him. "But so that we may not offend them, go to the lake and throw out your line. Take the first fish you catch; open its mouth and you will find a four-drachma coin. Take it and give it to them for my tax and yours." -Matthew 17:24b-27

Is Jesus advocating that we should go fishing to pay our federal and state income taxes? I don't think so, but he is advocating that we should pay those taxes even though we are children of the "Heavenly King."

Later on in Matthew, the Pharisees tried to trap Jesus by asking him if it was right to pay Caesar taxes. If we were to ask the same question, he would say, "Look at your money, whose inscription is on it? Then pay to Washington what is theirs and to God what is his." Actually, God asks for only 10% and Uncle Sam requires 10% from single tax payers earning only \$0-\$8,025 in tax year 2008. And if we look at it as a Christian should, everything we have is a gracious gift of God. If you believe this then let's be joyful givers to Pima County, Arizona, the United States and especially God.

Youth: Do you know that the best thing that will ever happen to you is becoming a child of God? And the next best thing is being an American citizen.

Adults: Pima Co., Arizona, and the U.S.A. don't give you a choice but do you pray to God for his direction in giving to his Kingdom?

Prayer: Father, we ask for faith to trust you in directing our gifts to you and for your Kingdom. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for ***the Presbytery of the Pacific*** (page 325 of the *Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study*).

Eternity Assured

by Karen Foss

I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. -Revelation 21:22-27

Heaven. No matter how we imagine what it's going to be like, we probably can't come close to comprehending just how good it's going to be.

A lot of people aren't comfortable talking about end times and what happens when we die. A believer is assured of a place in Heaven. Just reading the newspaper or watching television will confirm that there are things going on that point to end times that are described in the book of Revelation in the Bible.

There are several references to what we can expect in eternity. John 14:2-3 tells us that a place has been prepared for us. 1 Corinthians 2:9 assures us that we have a wonderful experience awaiting us. And most assuring is Revelation 21: 4 that there will be no more pain or death in that wonderful place.

Youth: Do you know that if anything happens to you or a loved one, that there is a way you or they could be in a better place?

Adults: Is your heart at peace knowing you have a place prepared for you in heaven?

Prayer: Dear Lord, we thank you for loving us so much that you have assured us of spending eternity with you. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for *the Presbytery of Riverside* (page 326 of the *Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study*).

Feed My Sheep

by John McKee

On a warm windy night
With the moon shining bright
A group of fishermen plied their trade.

They were tired and wet
As they hauled in their net...
Dejected with the catch they had made.

With backs aching and sore
They began rowing ashore
Which had not yet come into sight.

When a voice to them called out
From the beach with a shout...
"Cast your net from the boat to the right... "

When they did as directed
Upon the waves as they crested...
They scarce could believe their own eyes.

For their net was near breaking
Full of fish for the taking...
Which really took them by surprise.

Netting one hundred fifty three
Of large fish from the sea
Overjoyed them ... they had never caught more.

When John said it was the Master
They began to row faster
Toward the fire Jesus made on the shore.

He cooked breakfast for the men
As they pulled their boat in...
A few broiled fish with some bread.

Although the men were quite tired
A hot meal was desired
So they hastened to the Lord to be fed.

None dared ask, "Who are you?"
For each one of them knew
It was the Lord Jesus Christ greeting them.

He visited them twice before
Which made their spirits soar...
And this third time they knew it was him.

Now with breakfast completed
While the men were still seated
Christ turned to Simon Peter to say,

"... Do you love me more than these?"
Making Peter ill-at-ease
But he answered the One called the Way...

"Yes, Lord ... you know I love you."
But his anxiety grew
When Christ asked it of him twice again.

As he addressed him by name
Peter answered the same
But by now, he was filled with chagrin.

"Feed my sheep..." was his command
To Peter at his right hand
And, "Follow me." The last order he gave.

He meant it for you and for me
On this, I think you'll agree...
We're to reach out to all he can save.

Let us join in prayer for ***the Presbytery of San Diego*** (page 327 of the *Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study*).

Take the Free Gift

by Jennifer Hager

The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life. -Rev 22:17

Here, in the final verses of Holy Scripture, is the promise Jesus gives to all of us. Throughout the Bible, God's promises are given. The Scriptures tell us of God's love, his deliverance, his love and his grace many, many times. Think of all the stories in the Old Testament of God forgiving the Israelites their ways of sin and providing for them one more time! Or the woman at the well. Jesus showed his love by telling her of the water of life. The world had spurned her, but Christ sat down and told her of his love and his power.

In God's awesome love, the promises are told to us in many ways and in many forms so that we can learn and remember them. He uses parables, psalms, sermons and prayers to instruct us in his love. Jesus tells us to bear fruit. He commands us to be his messenger and tell others of him.

This verse reminds us of our privilege of saying to others "Come!" Jesus tells us that whoever is thirsty for him can take the free gift of life. Let us be the bearers of this wonderful promise.

Youth: Have you responded to Jesus' invitation to come?

Adults: Are you inviting others to come to Jesus as he reminds us to do?

Prayer: Almighty God, Lord Jesus—let my life be an invitation to others to come to you. Thank you for your gift freely given. May I freely give your gift to others.

Let us join in prayer for ***the Presbytery of San Francisco*** (page 328 of the *Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study*).

Say What?

by Pete Seiferth

The LORD Almighty will bless them, saying, "Blessed be Egypt my people, Assyria my handiwork, and Israel my inheritance." -Isaiah 19:25

There are just some things that don't go together. Cats and dogs. Jets and Sharks. Oil and water. Democrats and Republicans. Wildcats and Sun Devils.

In the days of Isaiah the prophet, you might say that Egypt and Assyria were about as far apart geographically and politically as you could get, with Israel caught in the middle. Assyria was the Mesopotamian empire that was known as a brutal super power which conquered Israel (Northern Kingdom - 722 BC) and the lands up to the Egyptian border, defeating the Egyptian army at Gaza. Assyria and Egypt also worshiped foreign and strange gods—not the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob! So, in Isaiah, we see the expected judgments of nations in chapters 13-24, against sinful nations who reject God. But then, we are caught with a curious image of a highway running between Assyria and Egypt, as mutual vacation destinations. Not only are they travelling to see each other, but they will worship the Lord—the one true God! Say what?

In this case, it seems, the Lord will make the impossible—possible.

It is like lions living with lambs! It is like sinners finding restoration and passing from death to life! It is as if God is not interested in our self selecting categories, and that in the Kingdom of God, with Christ as Lord, the anything is possible! Even the impossible...

Youth: What are two groups of people that you cannot even imagine getting along? What kind of miracle would it be for them to become friends?

Adults: Reflect on the impossible possibility of the gospel and that the God of the universe became human in the person of Jesus. What are the ways that God has made the impossible happen in your life?

Prayer: Lord, remove from me the doubt that you are really in control, and that you can make all things possible. Even I am a miracle of your making, made possible by your grace and love. Thank you Jesus! Amen.

Let us join in prayer for ***the Reign of Christ the King*** (page 329 of the *Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study*).

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 23 LECTIONARY READINGS

Ps 62:1-12

Joel 3:1-2,9-17

1 Pt 1:1-12

Mt 19:1-12

Ps 73:1-28

Strangers

by Scott Coverdale

To God's elect, strangers in the world ... grace and peace be yours in abundance. -1 Peter 1:1-2

What is Peter thinking when he opens his letter to the churches by calling them, "Strangers in the world.?" This is not typically what we want to be thought of, is it? We have the inclination to be hip, to be cool, to be "in," to be savvy, to be part of the "happening" crowd. Calling his friends "strangers in the world" was probably not representing their aspirations.

But Peter may have been saying something deeper than a comment about high society and social fashions. I think that he may have been observing that the followers of Jesus were really not winning any popularity contests. They were not the buzz of People magazine.

If we follow Christ, might it put us out of step with the society that we find ourselves part of? Consider our inclinations to pursue our own security and comfort above all else. Consider the attraction of power and influence. These are things that we might have to lay down if we are serious about following the man who told us to lay down our lives that we might find them, who told us that we should not worry about what we shall eat or drink or wear, but that we should live for loving others instead. Yes, following Jesus just might put us out of step with some aspects of the dominant cultural paradigm. People might think that we are a little odd, a little strange. Might keep their distance, just to be safe.

But if we follow Jesus, we find that our identity and purpose and the value in our lives comes from somewhere else. We don't need to be hip to every fashion. We need instead to find grace and peace in the knowledge that God loves us, and in the joy that is available to us as we share that love with those around us in need. So give up on making Who's Who. Go for the Whose are you?

Youth: In what ways does following Jesus make you different from other kids who you know? Is it okay to be different in that way?

Adults: Can you hear the voice of God over the voices of our popular culture? How do you know the difference?

Prayer: Help us to recognize your calling in our lives, above all of the other clamor calling out to us. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for *the Presbytery of San Gabriel* (page 330 of the *Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study*).

'Tis The Gift To Be Simple...

by Judy Williams

Then little children were brought to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked those who brought them. Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them for the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these."

Now a man came up to Jesus and asked, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?" Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in Heaven. Then come, follow me." -Matthew 19:13-14,16,21

In today's reading from Matthew's gospel we get a glimpse of the innocent simplicity of children contrasted with the complexity and acquired greed of the rich young ruler.

The children eagerly approached Jesus, who saw in them the open willingness to love and to learn and to follow him. The ruler, however, sadly rejected Jesus' invitation because he had become too wrapped up in the world to trade its trappings for everlasting life that would have been his in eternity.

I am reminded of these words from the Shaker hymn, "Simple Gifts":

| | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 'Tis the gift to be simple, | And when we find ourselves |
| 'Tis the gift to be free, | In the place just right, |
| 'Tis the gift to come down | 'Twill be in the valley |
| Where we ought to be, | Of love and delight. |

When true simplicity is gained
To bow and bend we shan't be ashamed.
To turn, turn, will be our delight
'Til by turning, turning, we come round right.

Youth: Will you tell a friend today about how much Jesus loves all of God's children? And will you always keep in mind how much he loves you?

Adults: Can you understand why the rich man was told to give his wealth away and follow Jesus? What will you do today to find eternal life?

Prayer: Father in Heaven, we long to be with you. We desire to turn from a life that keeps us enslaved to the world's things and to find the simplicity that would free us to be focused on your truth. Guide our thoughts and actions to that end, we pray. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for ***the Presbytery of Santa Barbara*** (page 331 of the *Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study*).

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 25 LECTIONARY READINGS

Ps 96:1-13

Obad 15-21

1 Pt 2:1-10

Mt 19:23-30

Ps 132:1-18

People of Light

by Marie Ruiz

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. -1 Peter 2:9-10

Tomorrow, we in the United States will celebrate Thanksgiving day, a national holiday that typifies families gathering together. Those very brave people who celebrated the first Thanksgiving came across the ocean to begin a new and free nation and be able to worship freely. In many ways those chosen few who were among the many who journeyed through peril and hardship to America were well aware of the mercies of God in protecting them in their travels and settlement alongside their Indian brothers who shared in that first Thanksgiving.

When we think of the many blessings God has bestowed on all of us, we are mindful that our greatest blessing is that of forgiveness and eternal life given by our Lord. As the scripture says in 1 Peter, we know that we belong to God when we have been forgiven our sin and brought into his wonderful light. It's like God seeing us brightly through a light now, and the darkness that we once carried is forever gone. He doesn't see our darkness any longer. He only sees us through His light. As a result of the forgiveness we have been given, we are part of God's family, a royal priesthood. We are so special to God, we are now called the "people of God." This is a remarkable truth, but one we also must protect. We live in a world of darkness, but God has called us into His light. Let us celebrate and be thankful for we have been grafted into God's family as chosen people; let us live out our life in the light of Christ.

Youth: Have you thought about those first pilgrims who came to America? What things were they thankful for that first Thanksgiving Day?

Adults: Can you share with one other person this week the mercies that you have received from God?

Prayer: Dear Lord, as your people help us to shine your light in this world of darkness. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for *the Synod of the Southwest* (page 332 of the *Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study*).

Life Out of the Penalty Box

by Jennifer Monroe

For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men. Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God. -1 Peter 2:15, 16

Even though I have lived in Canada for over a year now and the game practically amounts to a national religion, I still haven't picked up much hockey expertise. One thing I do know about it, however, concerns the existence of the penalty box. During a hockey game, a referee can decide to put players in "time out" if he finds that they are breaking certain rules (usually fighting or being overly rough on the ice). The ref can, in effect, put the players in jail, and they have to sit on the sidelines and watch their teammates play until their prison term is up. Once they are back on the ice, they are free to play again, as long as they stay within the rules.

Like a hockey player skating freely on the ice, Christians have been given the gift of life without restraints. We have been let loose out of the penalty box and are free to pursue our goal without any hindrances. Paul says in Romans 8:1-2: "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death." And in Galatians 5:1, he says, "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery." This freedom, however, does not mean that we can behave in any way we choose. Our actions still have consequences, and we need to be careful that we don't "use our freedom as a cover-up for evil," as Peter says. Rather, we need to live in such a way that the world around us will sit up and take interest, notice our good deeds, and be drawn to the love, peace, and joy of Christ that radiates through us. Sometimes, this might mean choosing to forgo certain "freedoms" in favor of living lives that call attention to the real freedom that comes from following Jesus Christ.

Youth: Have you ever been put in "time out" or been grounded? What did that feel like?

Adults: How can you live in such a way that will make the world around you sit up and take notice of the fact that you are a follower of Christ?

Prayer: Jesus, we believe that if you have set us free, we are free indeed. Please give us the grace we need to live lives that make that freedom attractive to other people. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for **Thanksgiving** (page 333 of the *Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study*).

Little Ol' Ant

by Cheryl Moore

...then they will hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified; and on the third day he will be raised. - Matthew 20:19

I have a rubber tree plant. I watered it; sometimes talked to it, pulled off dead leaves. But it stayed around two feet tall for years. A friend told me "It's native to South America! It's brutal down there! You have to violently tug on its stems to force it to be stronger!"

I laughed ... but I was willing to try anything. Once a week, I would go out and 'violently' pull on each stem and I'll be jiggered if that rubber tree did not shoot up to four feet tall! I had to transplant it into a much bigger pot! It seems by "Shaking" the plant; I was forcing its roots deeper to hold it in place so it could grow bigger and stronger than ever!

Now, everyday when I look at my rubber tree plant (never mind the ant) I am reminded of why God allows us to go through bad times, trials and pain. Only when we are shaken and tugged are we forced to hunker down and make our roots go deeper than we ever thought they could. God is the rich soil and water and Jesus is like our ever growing roots connecting us stronger to the Father!

Remember: "For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God..." 1 Peter 3:18.

If the wind will make me stronger and bring me closer to God, let it blow mightily!

If the fire will refine me with God's renewing Grace, let it burn!

If the raging water pounds me to the sand to humble me before my God, let it break me...and wash me clean.

Youth: When you go through a tough time, use it to lean on God and get closer to him!

Adults: Bad things do happen to good people, so do you act or react? Your first 'act' should be to pray, then give it to God!!

Prayer: God, we know you only want the best for us, please help us to use the hard times to get closer to you. Make us stronger and more steadfast in your Love and Grace. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for ***the Presbytery de Cristo*** (page 334 of the *Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study*).

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 28 LECTIONARY READINGS

Ps 63:1-11

Mic 7:11-20

1 Pt 4:7-19

Mt 20:29-34

Ps 125:1-5

Our Own Night Watchman

by Anne Price

On my bed I remember you, I think of you through the watches of the night.

-Psalm 63:6

Let us look at David who was a fugitive in the desert of Judah. He felt fearful in the darkness of the night yet he knew that he was not alone. God was watching over him. Therefore, he could peacefully go back to sleep unafraid. When I look at my own life I remember what the nights were like as I cared for my four babies many years ago. I suppose during those years I seldom had a full night's sleep. I needed to keep one ear open to the cries of my babies. Mothers that are reading this know the feeling of the loving responsibility of our young. As our children grew up to have families of their own we still at times wake up to wonder if our children are in some type of pain. When we know that God as our Forever Parent is always with us we can go back to grateful sleep.

He will protect our children and us as he did David. I love picture symbols that are reminders of God's love for us. In my hometown of San Pedro, California there is an old lighthouse that sends out light to guide ships safely into our harbor at night. God sent his son Jesus Christ as our light to send us to a peaceful shore. When it is dark, His light is our forever protection from the jagged rocks of life.

Youth: Have you ever awakened from a bad dream and gone to your parents so that you were no longer afraid?

Adults: At night can you turn off the day's problems knowing that God is listening?

Prayer: Thank you, Father, for never leaving us unprotected in the darkness of the night. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for *the Presbytery of Grand Canyon* (page 335 of the

Slipping the Bonds

by John McKee

At our appointed time,
We'll slip from these bonds
That have kept us tied here since birth...

And return home to Heaven
From whence we came
Before our temporary assignment on earth.

We have witnessed for Jesus
To those lost in darkness...
As reflectors of his holy Light.

Now, with our "Mission Accomplished"
We can go to our rest
In the knowledge we've fought the good fight.

Christ's last command to us
Before ascending to Heaven
To sit at the Father's right hand...

Was to, "Go into all the world,
"And preach the gospel..."
Spread his "Good News" throughout the land.

Remain steadfast to the end,
And when we go home to Jesus...
Beyond the farthest reaches of sky...

He'll quote from his parable...
"Well done, good and faithful servant..."
While angels sing softly nearby.

Oh, what a glorious celebration...
As we meet with our loved ones
Who slipped their fragile bonds long before.

We'll live in God's Holy City...
Sing his praise without ceasing...
Blessed with his joyful peace evermore.

Formula for New Year's Resolution

by Dale McArthur

For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. -2 Peter:5-7

The road of life is trampled with a barrage of discarded and failed New Year's resolutions. I suggest the reason for this is a lack of planning and control. Second Peter gives us a plan, if followed it will make us more successful in completing our resolution.

In my opinion, the ultimate in nursery production is the Bonsai tree. The nurserymen that produce these, to me, are the ultimate in craftsmanship and patience. The next time you see a Bonsai tree, observe it with the understanding that each turn of the branch, each size of the branch, its location and leaves, are the result of an adjustment made by the grower. When the shoot is planted, the nurseryman knows that it will be years of adjustments, trimming and shaping before the final product is produced. So it is with a New Year's resolution.

In many projects, they start with a progress chart listing down one side of the page the items to be produced and across the top of the page the date it is to happen. May I suggest you do the same with a New Year's resolution taking the items that Peter lists down one side of the page and the date of your accomplished goal across the top.

The above might sound complicated but it is a way of continually reviewing the progress of your New Year's resolution and provide a way to review and adjust it just like our little Bonsai tree.

Peter wrote this from Rome and they say that Rome was not built in a day nor is the change of a Bonsai limb or our lives. Jesus was a master carpenter, he is willing to help you with this construction project.

Youth: New Year's resolution are goals for our lives and God is willing to help us obtain our goals. What resolutions have you made?

Adults: Have you considered making your family a team that can assist each other with accomplishing their resolutions?

Prayer: Thank you, Lord, for the miracle of our brain as it can perform greater things than we know. Help us to use it wisely. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for ***the Presbytery of Santa Fe*** (page 337 of the *Presbyterian*)

Abbreviations of the Books of the Bible

Old Testament

Genesis - Gen
Exodus - Ex
Leviticus - Lev
Numbers - Num
Deuteronomy - Deu
Joshua - Jos
Judges - Jud
Ruth - Ruth
1 Samuel - 1 Sam
2 Samuel - 2 Sam
1 Kings - 1 Kng
2 Kings - 2 Kng
1 Chronicles - 1 Chr
2 Chronicles - 2 Chr
Ezra - Ezz
Nehemiah - Neh
Esther - Est
Job - Job
Psalms - Ps
Proverbs - Prv
Ecclesiastes - Ecc
Song of Solomon - Song
Isaiah - Is
Jeremiah - Jer
Lamentations - Lam
Ezekial - Eze
Daniel - Dan
Hosea - Hos
Joel - Joel
Amos - Am
Jonah - Jon
Micah - Mic
Nahum - Nah
Habakkuk - Hab
Zephaniah - Zeph
Haggai - Hag
Zechariah - Zech
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 Tim
2 Timothy - 2 Tim
Titus - Titus
Philemon - Philemon
Hebrews - Heb
James - Jam
1 Peter - 1 Pet
2 Peter - 2 Pet
1 John - 1 Jn
2 John - 2 Jn
3 John - 3 Jn
Jude - Jude
Revelation - Rev

Northminster Presbyterian Church

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

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