



ST. TIMOTHY'S TIMES

DAILY DEVOTIONAL READING

Used with permission from the Bible Reading Fellowship
PO Box 380 Winter Park, Florida 32790

Prayer for St. Timothy's

Most loving God, whose wisdom has guided St. Timothy's Anglican Church since its beginning, stir up your Spirit in our midst and lead us forward in the work we are called to do. Enable this congregation to continue in service to you and in ministry within and beyond our walls. Cleanse us of petty rivalries, sensitivities, vanities, discourtesies – everything which distracts us, thus freeing us to rejoice in the good performed by others. Grant that we may be united in a common purpose and share in a single spirit... your Spirit, Lord. Bless our work together that we may faithfully envision what you are calling us to be and to do, and bless our efforts to be faithful to your calling. Grant that your attractive goodness may be seen in all our faces, your warm accents of love heard in all our words, and in our lives may we show something of you to all the world. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, AMEN.

Monday, April 1

Birthdays:

Prayers for: Nancy McCracken; Doug & Natalie McGehee; Jim & Marty Medford; Clayton Melanson; Arturo Mendoza
1 Corinthians 15:1-11 Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures and ... he was buried and ... was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures.... (vv.3b-4)

Paul encapsulates the entire gospel in two verses—and assures us God's plan for salvation is backed up by His word. Christian faith isn't complicated. The Holy Spirit gives us grace to believe that Jesus made atonement for our sins—something we could never do. And, that he was raised from the dead—something God will do for us, too, if we believe! So, why do many reject the good news of the gospel? I suppose it's difficult for people to admit they are sinners in God's sight and there's no remedy except through a crucified and risen Savior. Another factor may be that believers don't share the gospel message enough. Why not? What have we got to lose? First Peter 3:15 (CEV) says: "Always be ready to give an answer when someone asks you about your hope." You may not be an evangelist, but we Christians are people of the Resurrection, filled with hope! Be prepared to share that hope and joy with others. It may truly make a difference in their lives.

Exodus 12:14-27; Psalms 93, 98; Mark 16:1-8

Tuesday, April 2

Birthdays: Solape Delano, Joan Okon, George Vick

Prayers for: Richard & Jacqueline Moehring; Jordan & Alex Monacy, Sadie; Keith & Beth Moore, Amanda, Mellissa

Mark 16:9-20 "This age of lawlessness and unbelief is under Satan, who does not allow the truth and power of God to prevail over the unclean things of the spirits. Therefore reveal your righteousness now"—thus they spoke to Christ. And Christ replied to them, "The term of years of Satan's power has been fulfilled, but other terrible things draw near." (v.14 footnote NRSVUE)

During this Eastertide, as nature is renewed around us in beauty and we are celebrating the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ with great joy, we are also cognizant of the mess our world is in: wars; climate disasters; widespread hunger, poverty and disease; political oppression and hatred; racial violence and mass shootings ... the list seems endless. It does appear as if "this age of lawlessness and unbelief is under Satan." All the more reason we must cling tightly to the truth of both God's written word, the Bible, and God's living Word, Jesus Christ. All of Scripture provides us with God's vision of shalom, when peace and justice shall prevail, and all shall be reconciled and renewed. Just read today's psalm, filled with praise for all the Lord does for us—healing and forgiveness. Let us not give in to despair over the state of this world that is passing away. Rather, focus on our mighty God who's still in charge—and the better things coming to all who believe in His Son. Thanks be to God. Alleluia!

Exodus 12:28-39; Psalm 103; 1 Corinthians 15:12-28

Wednesday, April 3

Birthdays: Sadie Monacy

Prayers for: Jesus & Angie Morales; Jeff & Lisa Musick, Alex, Zach, Ben; Blake & Lauren Muskiet, Ethan, Parker; Cliff & Colleen Nelson

Exodus 12:40-51 All the Israelites did just as the Lord had commanded Moses and Aaron. That very day the Lord brought the Israelites out of the land of Egypt, company by company. (vv.50-51 NRSV)

My Jewish friends look to the first Passover and the Exodus—their deliverance from Egypt—as eternally encouraging signs of the Lord's goodness and power. We Anglicans look to Jesus' Last Supper (a Passover meal) for his continuing presence with us in the Eucharist, and to his sacrificial death on the cross—our deliverance from death and hell—as lasting signs of God's love and sovereignty. In years past, our parish celebrated a Christian Seder during Holy Week. The food served and the texts read helped us connect the ancient Hebrews' freedom from slavery to their oppressors to our freedom from slavery to sin. I believe it's the same story—in two parts. Christians have been grafted into the tree of Judaism. In Romans 11:17a-18, Paul writes: "you, a wild ... shoot, were grafted among the others to share the rich root of the ... tree, do not boast over the branches. If you do boast, remember: you do not support the root, but the root supports you." As merely different branches of the same tree rooted in one God, there is no place for antisemitism.

Psalms 97, 99; 1 Corinthians 15:29-41; Matthew 28:1-16

Thursday, April 4

Birthdays: Olivia Kyser, Jan Rendl

Prayers for: Mark & Alice Norman, Hannah; Angel & Arianna Nunez; Dele Oduola; Kemi Oduola, Francisca, Gabriel; Rudy & Trisha Ortiz

Matthew 28:16-20 Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him; but some doubted. (vv.16-17 RSV)

Wait a minute. What? How can “but some doubted” immediately follow “they worshiped him”? I understand the “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief” spirituality of today’s followers of Jesus—at a 2,000-year remove from his earthly presence. But the “eleven disciples” actually knew Jesus in the flesh! They were eyewitnesses to his resurrection, and are now personally experiencing his ascension into heaven. How could they possibly harbor a shred of doubt? Perhaps the supernatural was just as hard for them to understand in 33 A.D. as it is for us to fathom in the 21st century. But we don’t have to understand God’s ways before we can worship Him. The Lord is worthy of our adoration, awe, and praise no matter what we think. The late Frederick Buechner once quipped: “Doubt is the ants in the pants of faith.” Maybe doubt and faith are often partners, such that we can’t judge the disciples’ mixed reaction to Christ’s ascension. After all, what do we mere humans know? “Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Hebrews 1:11 ESV).

Exodus 13:3-10; Psalms 146, 147; 1 Corinthians 15:41-50

Friday, April 5

Birthdays:

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

Psalm 136 Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his mercy endures for ever. Give thanks to the God of gods, for his mercy endures for ever. (vv.1-2 BCP)

Whenever this psalm is assigned in the Episcopal Church’s Daily Office, I tend to want to read a different psalm, because I find that reciting “his mercy endures for ever” 26 times becomes tedious and distracting. Unlike how I read it, Israel’s “hymn book” was meant to be sung antiphonally. The cantor would sing the verse, and the choir would respond with “his mercy endures forever.” But perhaps I’m overlooking the most important aspect of this psalm: Its repeated assurance of God’s everlasting mercy toward us—or, as the NRSV puts it, “his steadfast love endures forever.” Just in case we didn’t catch on, the first ten times. We humans get so full of ourselves or so down in the dumps, we tend to forget God loves us unconditionally and forever, extending to us mercy and forgiveness we don’t deserve. So maybe we must “endure” this psalm’s repetitive phrasing to remind ourselves of God’s enduring grace. Thank You, Lord!

Exodus 13:1-2, 11-16; 1 Corinthians 15:51-58; Luke 24:1-12

Saturday, April 6

Birthdays: Lynn Champion, Manny Garcia, Ted Huckaby, Alex Monacy

Prayers for: Alexander & Dawn Osaji, Brittany, Emmanuel, Alexandra; James & Caroline Osteen; Jennifer Parker, Larry, Lily, Chloe

2 Corinthians 4:16—5:10 So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. (v.16 NRSV)

Both my husband and I are senior citizens. We often talk about how, when we were growing up, no one warned us about what getting older would be like. We also agree that we wouldn’t want to remain the stupid, clueless, less-than-moral young people we were 40 years ago. Yes, our “outer nature is wasting away,” but thanks to both of us having a relationship with Jesus Christ—and aging—we’ve acquired a wisdom and a groundedness that we now treasure. Some things don’t work as well as they used to, but so little bothers us anymore. Getting over ourselves is the first step to greater wisdom—and embodies the humility we should all have as followers of Jesus. Aging seems to help this along. Proverbs 6:31 (NLT) says: “Gray hair is a crown of glory; it is gained by living a godly life.” That’s good to know. This coming week, pray for an aging friend or relative; call, visit, or write an encouraging card.

Exodus 13:17—14:4; Psalm 145; Mark 12:18-27

Sunday, April 7

Birthdays: Jim Geer

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

John 14:1-7 “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me.” (v.1 NIV)

I have often wondered why it was so difficult to let Jesus speak “Peace, be still” to my heart and to have my heart respond. Looking externally, I would assume that anyone caught in a precarious situation would more than welcome the assuaging of the storms of life. But often we don’t. Often we want to be changed but not do the changing. When I look at my own life, I see places where I get great mileage out of my circumstances. It is almost as if I were saying: “Look at me, look at how rough things are; aren’t I something; aren’t I being a super Christian?” That’s not healthy mileage, and in those times, there is no peace in my heart. But where the paralysis often lies is in lack of trust, lack of leaning fully into the Father and letting His seed of hope take root within us. Only then is trouble not a companion; only then can we find freedom in the spacious place to which He has brought us.

Exodus 14:5-22; Psalms 146, 147; 1 John 1:1-7

Monday, April 8

Birthdays:

Prayers for: Mike & Cecelia Railey; David & Carol Ray; Alan & Jan Rendl; Laura Rendon, Evelyn, Alizha, Angilina; Martha Rodabaugh, Lauren, Cassie
Exodus 14:21-31 And when the Israelites saw the mighty hand of the Lord displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant. (v.31)

For many of us, our time of conversion was dramatic. Circumstances in life brought us to a point of no return and, in that moment, we finally relinquished control of our lives to the Father who had pursued us. If that particular event was not dramatic, often the changes that occurred in our lives following that time were major. But have you noticed that what often happens is that as we go on in our Christian lives, the dramatic spiritual breakthroughs and healings—the evidence of the Lord’s hand at work—becomes less and less a part of our everyday lives? There is a reason we are brought together as the Body of Christ, called as believers to share the stories of our encounters with the Lord. Just as the Israelites believed when they saw the power that the Lord displayed, so our faith is strengthened and our hope increased by the stories of our brothers and sisters as they encounter God in their lives. The more we distance ourselves from these stories, the weaker the foundation of our faith. God calls us to “remember,” to relive and retell the stories, so that we see what He is doing in our lives right now.

Psalms 1, 2, 3; 1 Peter 1:1-12; John 14:8-17

Tuesday, April 9

Birthdays:

Prayers for: Kathy Rohm; David Ronkainen; Angel & Connie Rosa, Tyann, Erik, Matthew, Sara; Robert Rusinovich; Corinne Sandifer

1 Peter 1:13-25 Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming. (v.13)

We live in a time in which there is great apathy and indifference. It seems that the closer we live to one another geographically, the farther apart we are in our relationships with others. Sensitivity to, and care for others seems to suffer. Here Peter exhorts us to prepare our minds for action, to be alert and sober. It is a preparation that puts us in a proactive posture. In order to be prepared for action, we must take our thoughts and focus them on the very source of life. The call to be self-controlled, surely not a popular worldly concept, means that we are rejecting thoughts and influences that come to take root in our minds, other than what the Father sends. Then, we can set our hope fully, because we are prepared to make God’s choices, to have Him as our focus, and to do the things He would have us do in a very needy world.

Exodus 15:1-21; Psalms 5, 6; John 14:18-31

Wednesday, April 10

Birthdays: Brenda Valencia, Cathy Weisser

Prayers for: Leticia & Horacio Salazar Jr., Elizabeth, Horacio, Victor, Santos, Alberto, Manuel; Jon & Jency Santos, Penelope; Ronnie Sefcik, Todd

Psalms 119:1-24 I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. (v.11)

My thoughts cannot help but go to a small child finding some special treasure in the backyard. It might be a rock or an old coin, but it becomes a treasure to the child. That treasure finds a special place in the room and becomes the object of the child’s attention. It becomes the first thing the child checks on when he returns from school; it is well cared for and delighted in. Our call as Christians is to give God’s word the same sort of treasure status in our lives. That we might read His word again and again, looking for and expecting to find new facets of this precious gem. That when our day finds us with a few moments, we might go to the place where we have stored this treasure and look lovingly into it. When we carry Scripture in our hearts, we carry a knowledge of God’s love for us, and to sin or separate ourselves from Him is the very last thing we would want to do. Find that treasure and hold it close.

Exodus 15:22—16:10; 1 Peter 2:1-10; John 15:1-11

Thursday, April 11

Birthdays: Jim Jones

Prayers for: Charles & Dcn. Jennifer Scherzer; Warren & Donna Settles, Linden, Ethan, Deanna; Valerie Shepherd; Jack & Summer Sherrod, Braylee

Exodus 16:10-22 Then Moses said to them, “No one is to keep any of it until morning.” (v.19)

Moses is telling the Israelites to gather the manna, the bread from heaven, each day, taking only what they need for that day. Concerned about the adequacy of the provision, some of the Israelites gathered more, only to find it maggot-infested the next morning. How very indicative of human nature. It is incredibly difficult for us to believe that God will take care of us, will be our provision, not just today but all the days down the road. And so we begin to accumulate: money, possessions, defenses, whatever it might be that we think He might neglect. While the actual things that we have accumulated might not “rot,” they will often cause a rotting in our souls. To learn to lean on the Lord daily for our physical, emotional, and spiritual provision is to be able to see the expansiveness of His love for us. When our storehouses are full, we are less likely to lean into the heart of the Father and listen for His direction. Our call is to awaken each day, waiting to hear His voice, waiting to receive His provision, eager to delight in Him alone.

Psalms 18:1-20; 1 Peter 2:11-25; John 15:12-27

Friday, April 12

Birthdays: Jim Boggs, Frank Boyd

Prayers for: Laura Shipman, Emilia; David Sierra & Nina Torres, Alondra, Andrea; Brenda Spiess; Frank & Pat Stahl; Lee & Dianna Stein

John 16:1-15 “I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear.” (v.12)

It's no wonder that many people, in discussing matters of faith, try to avoid Christians. For some reason we seem to feel we have to dispense our entire knowledge of the faith each time we meet an unbeliever. “If water is good for my plant,” we must think, “then I'm bringing out the firehose!” In cases like that, we are not being “salt and light,” we are not even listening to the questions or needs of the person with us. We think that we know what they need. Jesus prepared his disciples by telling them and showing them as much as they could receive. He acknowledged that there was much more they needed to know, but that would have to come when the Holy Spirit came. When we “pour out all our wisdom,” it is as though we are not trusting God in matters of timing and proportion. As the delicate seed planting begins in the hearts of others, let us listen carefully to the Father as He tells us if we are to prepare, to plant, to water, to wait—whatever our part may be.

Exodus 16:23-36; Psalms 16, 17; 1 Peter 3:13—4:6

Saturday, April 13

Birthdays: Heidy Alvarenga, Edmundo Alvarez, Marty Medford

Prayers for: Bennett & Franne Stewart; Lee & Carole Stoerner; Anne Sundquist; Charlotte Talley; Linda Tervay; Greg & Terry Thomas; Lucy Tischler

1 Peter 4:7-19 The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray. (v.7)

We live in a world that is inundated with noise, with details, with distractions, with schedules. Day-Timers and calendars are as necessary as gas in the car, as we move from event to event in constant motion. Here Peter is calling us to be clear minded and self-controlled. To be clear minded implies not only that all calendars agree, but that we have made choices as to what to embrace and what to relinquish. Clear mindedness allows us to see truth objectively, self-control allows us to act on it responsibly, but prayer is the underlying necessity. While we would like to think that we can pray anytime, we see here that we must prepare our hearts and minds in order to get at the essence of prayer—communication with the Father that allows us to listen as well as to voice our concerns. Let us pray for the power of the Holy Spirit to reign in our lives so that we are always ready to come to the Father, whose very love gives us all life and hope.

Exodus 17:1-16; Psalms 20, 21; John 16:16-33

Sunday, April 14

Birthdays:

Prayers for: Roman & Caileigh Thaxton, Kinzleigh, Kendall, Karmin; Lori & Dieter Tischler; Jim & Elaine Tummy; Mary Lee Turk; George & Sandra Vick

1 John 2:7-17 The one who says he is in the Light yet hates his brother is in the darkness.... (v.9 NAS)

A friend once told me the most vivid memory she had of her grandfather was his outrage. He would stand in front of the television set and curse, and yell, and contort, and shake his hand at news anchors—endlessly. Everyday! Actually, I can relate. Sometimes I think I have earned a degree in Self Righteousness. I loved my own father, but he could turn the air blue with cutting sarcastic judgment. Sadly, so can I. Recently I found myself in a searing religious disagreement with an old friend. We were writing and our correspondence grew heated month after month. At one point my friend sent a video with speakers supporting his views. My outrage went through the roof. Upon cooling down I was reminded of the accuser of the brethren—the devil who relishes in dividing people. Is this worth ruining a friendship over, I had to ask myself? I decided not. I'm just not going to hate on him. I prayed for my friend (and myself) instead.

Exodus 18:1-12; Psalms 148, 149, 150; Mark 16:9-20

Monday, April 15

Birthdays:

Prayers for: Daniel & Edith Valdez, Eric, Hiroshi, Yuriko; Jose & Brenda Valencia; Dick & Marlene Van Horne; Brian & Sara Volante, Luke, Blake

1 Peter 5:1-14 ...clothe yourself with humility towards one another (v.5)

I have attended many churches throughout my lifetime, mostly due to moving. One pastor I recalled had an endearing habit of introducing himself as “one of the pastors here.” Truth is he was the Lead Pastor and head of that particular Church. While it was a very simple gesture, I always took note of that humility. Another time I recall a Bishop celebrating Easter Mass. Oh my, he had every kind of cloak and crown and satchels, and ribbons and a shepherd staff. Pulling at his collar, his crown tilting, he finally let the crown fall and asked a lady in the front row if she wouldn't mind holding it. I couldn't help musing at how humble this dear Bishop was as well—clearly uncomfortable with excess. And, then there was Jesus who took a servant's role washing his disciples' feet as, in his own words, an everlasting example for all of us. The American culture I live in and am part of worships its all-consuming Bill of Rights mindset for which my faith constantly reminds me otherwise.

Exodus 18:13-27; Psalm 25; Matthew 1:1-17, 3:1-6

Tuesday, April 16

Birthdays: Peter Daigle

Prayers for: Chris & Lisa Wanner, Matthew, Nicholas; Edmond & Phyllis Warren; Ray & Suzi Waters; Cathy Weisser, Caydence, Camilla, Carsyn

Exodus 19:1-16 “...whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death.” (v.12b)

We are told God’s first meeting with Moses had severe preconditions. So foul the humans race had apparently become, even Moses himself was required to remove his shoes and hide his face at the first encounter. While God did make Israel a nation of priests later, initially even those priests who were defective were banned from the most sacred inner area by a 60-foot temple curtain. Only the most righteous and unblemished priests could enter beyond. All of which reminds me of my own epiphany at 16. So powerful was the experience that at one point I had to pull away. A memory still etched in my seventy-year-old soul. The fear of God has unique meaning to me. For which today’s reading makes me all the more grateful for the crucifixion—the one and only thing that finally satisfied God and at that very moment, granted grace even to the defective with that enormous temple curtain tearing in half—forever.

Psalm 26, 28; Colossians 1:1-14; Matthew 3:7-12

Wednesday, April 17

Birthdays:

Prayers for: Dave & Helen Weigand, Timmy, Alaina, Cassie, Charlie, Emma; Guy & Sonji Williams; Danny & Debbie Winkler, Kaylyn, Jennifer, Kaydence

Psalm 38 Do not forsake me, O LORD; O my God, do not be far from me! (v.21)

Today’s reading is very typical David. Bemoaning his enemies, his wretched soul, his sinfulness. Depressed by even his loved ones who stand aloof as if they clearly perceive the murderous, lustful, manipulating person that he sometimes was. I have to admit I too sometimes feel great resentment against that king. So revered by Christians, Jews, and Muslims and yet someone who entertained multiple wives and shed blood. David peers with others such as Egypt’s Ramses II, husband to over 200 wives who engaged in, what the American Research Center dubbed, the first world war; and Britain’s Henry VIII who waged to kill the French, the Scots, the Irish, and even 2 of his 6 wives. And yet, David, for all his adultery, treachery, and bloodshed as well, remains highly regarded. Even bearing Christ through family heritage. So what was different about him? Perhaps his persistent self-abasement, rare for a King. Along with those who hated, loathed, and devised against him, he, too, hated his sins, often begging for mercy, pleading the Lord his God: “be not far.”

Exodus 19:16-25; Colossians 1:15-23; Matthew 3:13-17

Thursday, April 18

Birthdays: Noah Gerber, Danny Winkler

Prayers for: Anita Wolfe; John & Kathryn Zacharias, Matthew; John & Nealene Ziebell; Ana Acosta; Edmundo & Carmelina Alvarez; Pat Alvis

Psalm 37:1-18 Give up anger, abandon fury,...it can only do harm. (v.8 JSB)

Today’s US military budget is about \$800 billion (second highest is China at \$230 billion). We also have a million armed government officers serving to protect our states, cities, and counties. But, in addition, we now we have 300 million civilian-owned firearms and skyrocketing mass shootings suggesting a country growing in fear and anger. I used to read the Sermon on the Mount every Saturday morning. I did this for a long time. I always learned something new or felt guilty about somewhere I’d fallen short. I never recall the Sermon discussing preferred forms of government. Instead, I learned about the spirit of human behavior (or the lack of it) and was challenged to step back and look above the fray for answers and that narrow road that few find—or quickly dismiss. What is very much in the fray is human anger and revenge. A friend visiting a cousin in France was once asked by locals, “You Americans have everything. What are you so angry about?”

Exodus 20:1-21; Colossians 1:24—2:7; Matthew 4:1-11

Friday, April 19

Birthdays:

Prayers for: Alice Amos Nwanguma; Diamond & Rowland Amos Nwanguma, Clinton, Brandon; Stella Amos Nwankwo; Suzanne Arnold, Connor

Exodus 24:1-18 ...and Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights. (v.18 NAS)

In subsequent chapters of today’s reading, we learn why Moses needed to be gone so long, but the people of Israel didn’t have that advantage which might have curbed their ensuing idolatry. 1892 author Violet Fane’s original quote “Good things come to those who wait” is said to be translated from the French *Tout vient a qui sait attendre* which more accurately reads, Everything comes to who knows how to wait—something neither Israel nor I have done very well. In her book *7 Lenses*, consultant Linda Thornton suggests at least 7 ways on how to wait. A person must work hard; help others; keep working; keep learning; keep serving; never quit; and repeat all those over and over. The speed at which Israel took to worshipping graven images in that short 40-day time frame remind me of Carrie Fisher who said, “Instant gratification takes too long.” However, today’s reading reminds me that Israel’s impatience ultimately cost them dearly. So might mine.

Psalm 105:1-22; Colossians 2:8-23; Matthew 4:12-17

Saturday, April 20

Birthdays: Kathryn Lamb

Prayers for: Shane & Jessica Anderson, Mical, Isaac, Daniell; Gwen Arora; Cody & Rachel Ault, Alex, Evelyn, Charlotte, Margaret; Wayne Ballentine

Exodus 25:1-22 “And this is the contribution you are to raise from them: gold, silver, bronze....acacia wood....” (vv.3-5).

God gave Moses a list of items to build His sanctuary. Along with gold and silver was, of all things, acacia wood. As an arborist, I wondered what was so special about this desert tree. Because, unlike the sexy weeping Willow, the statuesque Cedar, or the dreamy Tamarisk, desert Acacia is rather plain in appearance. In Greek, Acacia rightly translates, “thorny.” It’s pods are twisted and the bi-pinnate leaves are tiny. Not a tall tree. But, the desert Acacia *raddiana* thrives in dry river beds with roots penetrating far deeper than most plants allowing it to tolerate the worst of droughts. And while even its grain is said to be “gnarly and changes direction,” finished Acacia furniture is stunning. I confess to a lifetime of poor self-esteem. Wasn’t popular in high school. Late bloomer. Never the center of attention and challenged with emotional identity. But while I may only make claim to mediocrity, I take courage in the peculiar and inauspicious Acacia tree for which God, apparently, found value.

Psalms 30, 32; Colossians 3:1-17; Matthew 4:18-25

Sunday, April 21

Birthdays: Shane Dear, Marlene Van Horne

Prayers for: Fehintolu & Kehinde Babayemi, Bukunmi, Folawemi; Jose Bastard & Isabel Celaya, Sophia, Vivian; Maria Del Carmen Bastard

Mark 6:30-44 “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.” (v.31b NIV).

I don’t know about you, but that kind of an invitation, and especially from Jesus, would be very welcome. How often he extends this kind of invitation is hard to say because we are usually so busy we can’t hear ourselves think, let alone hear that still small voice offering us “some rest.”

I can remember when I was a young mother with three children under the age of three and a husband in the Navy often away for 6-8 months at a time. Older women would encourage me to have “me” time. I would usually get angry or defensive and say that I was just fine, doing exactly what God was calling me to do, thank you very much, you might need some “me” time, but I don’t. Jesus needed a quiet place and rest, who did I think I was? Fortunately, God didn’t give up on me but continued to encourage me to find “a quiet place and get some rest.” During those times of rest I find myself listening for that still small voice, looking for God’s fingerprints all around me and being fed by His word. Very often following these times of refreshment God gets very busy using us.

Exodus 28:1-4, 30-38; Psalms 63, 98; 1 John 2:18-29

Monday, April 22

Birthdays:

Prayers for: Kyla Bayang, Vicki; Steve & Nanette Benoit; Preston & Carolyn Benson, Ella; Sue Benson; Ken & Patti Bill; Anne Birkhead; Ed & Zonia Bock

Colossians 3:18—4:18 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. (vv.23-24).

Brother Lawrence wrote a wonderful little classic called, *The Practice of the Presence of God*. In it he describes how he discovered that the art of living a joyful life lies not necessarily in what we do but with what kind of an attitude we do it. If we regard our work as an act of service to God, regardless of what that work is, it can take some of the drudgery and boredom out of it. What freedom there is in offering your day, your work, your rest, your everything to God. Knowing that you are working for God first, not for men, can put a joy in your heart that some cannot comprehend. It is a freedom to accept whatever situation God has for you knowing that it is for Him that you are serving. This concept makes me think about jobs such as teachers and healthcare workers, two very important services, and yet often low paying jobs. People I know in these professions have a love for mankind and a desire to care for God’s people.

Exodus 32:1-20; Psalms 41, 52; Matthew 5:1-10

Tuesday, April 23

Birthdays: Ethan Settles

Prayers for: Jim & Dcn. Kathy Boggs, Chris; Ruby Bosh, JB; Carolyn Boyd; Frank Boyd; Nettie Briggs; Bob & Diann Brooke; Bruce Brough

1 Thessalonians 1:1-10 We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. (v.3).

Wouldn’t you love to have people say verse 3 about you? My husband’s mother demonstrates these ingredients of the Christian life, work produced (inspired) by faith, labor prompted by love, and endurance inspired by (founded on) hope. My father-in-law has had Parkinson’s disease for years and it is compounded by Post-polio syndrome, blindness due to glaucoma, and a war injury that has left his left hand virtually useless.

My mother-in-law is a Christian who I look up to. Her faith has sustained her over the years and spills over to all who come in contact with her. She never complains to those around her. Her labor, all the big and little things she does, is prompted by her great love. She is selfless, always looking out for others. But for me, the ingredient that I try to emulate is her endurance which is inspired by (founded on) hope in Jesus. Regardless of how bleak things appear, and believe me some days they seem very bleak, she knows who she belongs to and who is walking each and every step with her. She is the model for Romans 5:5, “And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit.” During our times of trials may we be “inspired by hope.”

Exodus 32:21-34; Psalm 45; Matthew 5:11-16

Wednesday, April 24

Birthdays:

Prayers for: Erik & Mary Brown, Eli, Hayden, Jack; Kathy Buckner; David & Betsy Burns; Eric & Lauren Burns, Jameson, Jack; Nita Burrer, Jason

Psalm 119:49-72 You have given me hope. My comfort in my suffering is this; Your promise preserves my life. (vv.49b-50).

Can you imagine saying, "My comfort in my suffering is..."? To my way of thinking, how can there be any comfort in suffering? But God—oh, how I love that phrase—has given us hope, to desire something confidently expecting its fulfillment. My comfort comes from His promises. If that is true, and I believe it is, then I need to know what those promises are so that I can claim them as my own. The following are a few examples: Psalm 73:26 "My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever." He has promised me eternity. Isaiah 25:8 "He will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces." God comforts us. John 3:15 "Everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life." If we believe, God promises us eternal life. Philippians 4:13 "I can do everything through Him who gives me strength." God strengthens me for what He calls me to do. 2 Timothy 1:7 "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity (fear) but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline (a sound mind)." Fear is not from God. Scripture is full of God's promises. Find them and claim them.

Exodus 33:1-23; 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12; Matthew 5:17-20

Thursday, April 25

Birthdays: Lauren Muskiet

Prayers for: Brian & Gail Cahill; Brian Callahan; Bob & Mary Capps; Giselle Castillo; Dcn. Jorge & Elizabeth Cavazos; Emile & Lynn Champion

1 Thessalonians 2:13-20 And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the work of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe. (v.13).

When at the age of 29 I finally accepted Christ into my life as Savior and Lord, God was very gracious with me. I knew that I knew that I knew. Sure, I had and have a lot to learn. But there is no doubt in my mind that "Christ has died, Christ is risen, and Christ will come again." It's like when I quit smoking. God knew that it couldn't be gradually. The day I found out I was pregnant with our first child, I quit and have never looked back. For some people there must be a time of wrestling and questioning. My husband had many preconceived ideas about what would happen if he turned his life over to God and became a Christian. Things like he would never have any more fun, life would be serious all the time, no more wine. After wrestling with Scripture and praying for discernment and receiving the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, he came to understand that the word of God was for him as well as for the original hearers and that it was and is very important not only to study Scripture but to believe it and share it.

Exodus 34:1-17; Psalm 50; Matthew 5:21-26

Friday, April 26

Birthdays: Lisa Coe, Jeff Musick

Prayers for: Shelia Chandler; Jeff & Connie Chestnut; Maureen Clairday; Byron & April Clark, Clinton; Scott & Ashley Clarke, Chase, Trevor, Weston

Psalm 40 I do not hide your righteousness in my heart; I speak of your faithfulness and salvation. I do not conceal your love and your truth from the great assembly. (v.10).

If you were arrested for being a Christian would there be enough evidence to convict you? When I first heard that question I laughed. "I'm a Christian, of course there would be enough evidence." And then I thought about it. Do people see me as someone who is different? Is there anything in my life that labels me as a nonconformist? Do I participate in gossip? Am I kind? Do people know I pray? How do I handle difficult circumstances and difficult people? If I expect Jesus to escort me to the Father, I must acknowledge who Jesus is and what he does and has done for me. I must tell my story. And when times get tough I must remember all the ways God was with me in the past and expect Him to be with me now and in the future. I must walk my talk, "Not everyone who says, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). I can say anything I want, but if my actions don't match my words, I am a hypocrite and in the end a big loser. Be ready at all times not only to speak of God's love and faithfulness but to show it so that there would be enough evidence to convict you of being a Christian.

Exodus 34:18-35; Psalm 54; 1 Thessalonians 3:1-13; Matthew 5:27-37

Saturday, April 27

Birthdays: Dawn Ontiveros, Edith Valdez

Prayers for: Keith & Lisa Coe; Chris & Candace Collings; Trey & Sherri Cowan, Cade; Gary & Delores Coward; Allan & Sue Cox; Caroline & Robert Craze

1 Thessalonians 4:1-12 Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that You will not be dependent on anybody. (vv.11-12).

In today's fast-paced world the idea of leading a quiet life seems impossible. Actually, without God's help, lots of prayer, and a conscious effort to choose such a lifestyle, it would be impossible. Families are now too busy to eat dinner together. Everyone has a different activity causing them to be like ships passing in the night. Our children must be kept busy after school, no down-time allowed. We have taken playtime out of our vocabulary. Mom and Dad are busy with their own activities, which includes overworking, and times of playing catch in the front yard or baking cookies from scratch are considered old fashioned and outdated. When our personal lives are so cluttered with busyness we damage our witness. If we don't have time for those who are nearest and dearest to us, how can we have time for anything else? As we approach summer, often a more relaxed time of year, I challenge you to look ahead and pray and choose to simplify your life.

Exodus 40:18-38; Psalm 55; Matthew 5:38-48

Sunday, April 28

Birthdays: Scott Clarke, Ophelia Gonzales

Prayers for: Mike & Kay Daigle, Paul, Peter, Kaylee; Bill & Caroline Davies; Mary Karen Davis; Shane & Kristina Dear, Jacob, Lauren

Psalm 24 The earth is the LORD'S and all it contains, the world and those who dwell in it. For he has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers. (vv.1-2 NAS)

The Hebrew word used for "earth" (transliterated: *erets*) means the physical planet while the word used for "world" (*tebel*) refers to the "social world" or human inhabitants of the earth. These verses re-affirm the story of creation told so eloquently in the first chapters of Genesis.

I love the land. I enjoy tilling the soil, pulling weeds, planting seeds, and watching things grow. Some of Jesus' most beloved parables were parables of the land about mustard seeds, weeds, the sower, workers in the vineyard, the vine and the branches, etc. Jesus used these images because he knew they would connect with his hearers. When I work in my garden, I feel a sense of joy to know that working the land is what humans have done ever since our creation. Farming (not prostitution) is really the world's oldest profession. There is no "spiritual world" versus a "physical world" because it is all a "spiritual world." Preserving the integrity of the earth—protecting the rivers, seas, soil; maintaining the forests and recycling as much as possible—is a spiritual endeavor. Make no mistake about it; God created the whole world and expects us to take care of it.

Leviticus 8:1-13, 30-36; Psalm 29; Hebrews 12:1-14; Luke 4:16-30

Monday, April 29

Birthdays: Pat Doremus

Prayers for: Fisoje & Solape Delano; Cynthia Dennis; Deborah Denoble; Lisa DiBiasio, Emma; Mike & Carolyne Digel; Fr. Larry & Brenda DiSano

Psalm 56 My foes have trampled upon me all day long, for they are many who fight proudly against me. When I am afraid, I will put my trust in thee. (vv.2-3)

The psalmist is not paranoid because there really were people against him. After September 11, 2001, most of us were shocked to realize that so many people hated Americans. Members of the al-Qaeda network spent their lives plotting ways to destroy us. While the reasons for their hatred are debatable, the reality of it is not. That year, the Wall Street Journal publisher, Peter Kann, wrote in his annual report to readers: "We have all been vividly reminded (and a new generation has suddenly discovered) that there is evil in this world, not merely debatable degrees of moral ambiguity. That this should be so significant is a sad reflection on a moral relativism that has become pervasive and debilitating..." M. Scott Peck, author of *The Road Less Traveled*, told stories of evil people in his 1983 book *People of The Lie*. He wrote in its introduction, "This is not a nice book. It is about our dark side, and in large part about the...members of our human community I frankly judge to be evil." No honest Christian faith can fail to recognize evil and evil people. The more responsibilities you hold and the more decisions you make that affect people, the more likely you have enemies. My advice: Be wise, be discerning, and be prepared for evil at all times.

Leviticus 16:1-19; Psalms 57, 58; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

Tuesday, April 30

Birthdays:

Prayers for: Tom Donley; Mark & Jennifer Doremus; Pat Doremus; Richard & Betty Dove; Mike Downs; Kathleen Ellis; Grace England

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 Therefore encourage one another, and build up one another, just as you also are doing. (v.11)

No verse in the New Testament contains clearer "marching orders" for a local church than this one. Our first duty within a body of believers is to encourage and support one another. Without encouragement, we will not have the strength or resolve to go out into the world to do works of charity and proclaim the gospel. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German pastor and theologian who was executed by Hitler's firing squad because of his Christian witness, wrote these words in his book *Life Together*: "The physical presence of other Christians is a source of incomparable joy and strength to the believer. God has willed that we should seek and find God's living Word in the testimony of other Christians, in the mouths of human beings. Therefore, Christians need other Christians who speak God's word to them." I like going to church because there I receive encouragement, support, and appreciation from other Christians. But it's like the mail: to get it, you also have to give it. Next time you go to church, seek an opportunity to say some kind words of encouragement to others.

Leviticus 16:20-34; Psalms 61, 62; Matthew 6:7-15