

Monday, January 29

Birthdays: Santos Aguilar

Prayers for: Chris & Lisa Wanner, Matthew, Nicholas; Ray & Suzi Waters; David & Helen Weigand, Alaina, Cassie, Nathaniel, Charlie

Hebrews 11:1-12 Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen. It gives us assurance about things we cannot see. (v.1)

The “roll call” listed in Hebrews 11 is inspiring. The unknown and lurking dangers of Old Testament times—political intrigue, greed, unpredictable brutality, helplessness of the innocent bi-stander—surrounded God’s people. Sound familiar? Many of those mentioned in Hebrews 11 and elsewhere in Scripture were like you and I, people just trying to live their lives. The ones who lived “by faith.” Noah who built a boat to survive a storm not yet visible and Abraham who left home “without knowing where he was going” (v.8), for example, are inspiring role models for us today. We can rarely turn on media without learning of—even viewing—catastrophe. Reading Hebrews 11 to refresh the screen of my mind with the love, power, and faithfulness of God—with His wisdom that knows my needs even more and before I do—gets me through. As in Psalm 59:9b, “...for You, O God, are my fortress.”

Genesis 19:1-29; Psalms 56, 57, 58; John 6:27-40

Tuesday, January 30

Birthdays: Rebekah Greenwood, Marian Mann

Prayers for: Mike & Anna Weil; Cathy Weisser; Kent & Tracey Weissing, Sean, Jeff; Erma Wetmore; Kaylyn White, Kaydence

Psalm 61 From the ends of the earth I call to you, I call as my heart grows faint; lead me to the rock that is higher than I. (v.2 NIV)

What a powerful example David sets in the flow of this psalm! He begins this and many of his writings in confusion and anguish—his mind and heart full to the brim with fear and rejection. Yet as he pours out these overwhelming, absorbing feelings to God, he empties his heart, mind, and soul of those emotions and the lies embedded in them. And as David empties himself of those negative emotions, he makes room for truth—the power, love, and faithfulness of God who is “the rock higher than I.” David knew the necessity of pouring out his pain to the Father and then recognizing God for who He is—refuge, sanctuary, watching over us with faithful love. His path from pain to praise and thanksgiving is clear. As the old song says, let’s “Give it all to Him,” our Father, and receive back His love.

Genesis 21:1-21; Psalm 62; Hebrews 11:13-22; John 6:41-51

Wednesday, January 31

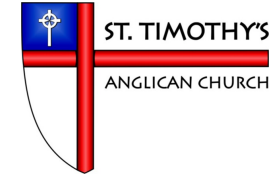
Birthdays:

Prayers for: Joe Boyd & Kate Williams; Matt Willoughby, Meghan, Clare; Danny & Debbie Winkler, Jennifer; David York

Genesis 22:1-18 “God will provide a sheep for the burnt offering, my son, Abraham answered.” (v.8a NLT)

The same Abraham who leaned on his and Sarai’s own understanding, conceiving Ishmael with Hagar, now obeys with deep faith. He walks up the mountain with his long-awaited son carrying the wood to sacrifice that son! He ties his son and lays him on the altar; he picks up a knife...and...It’s then, at the height of Abraham’s obedience, God calls to him through an angel: “...now I know that you truly fear God. You have not withheld from me even your son, your only son” (v.12b). Can I be forgiven the times I have leaned on my understanding and created Ishmael situations? Will I reply to God, “Here am I” when God calls as Abraham did (v.11b) and step out in faith—obedient to His command—relying on His truth and love? Am I willing to sacrifice what is most precious to me in obedience to the God who knows me better than I know myself?

Psalm 72; Hebrews 11:23-31; John 6:52-59



ST. TIMOTHY'S TIMES DAILY DEVOTIONAL READING

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PO Box 380 Winter Park, Florida 32790

Monday, January 1

Birthdays:

Prayers for: Keith & Annamaria Hager, Sophia, Slade, Skylar; Allison Hall; Mark & Mary Hargis

Isaiah 62:1-5, 10-12 For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not be quiet, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness. (v.1a ESV)

Our calling is not to be silent. We are not called to be quiet in the face of injustices. We are called to speak up for the oppressed, to speak out against evil, to rise up against the injustices that we find in this world. The courage to speak up—sometimes it can be difficult to come by. This courage requires going beyond the status quo, rising above the complacency of routine. This means different things based on your sphere of influence, specific skills, and your calling, but there is one common thread: we are called to be active, not passive, in this fight for justice. This might not be an entirely comfortable life—but it is what is required of us, and it is the right thing to do. So, on this New Year's Day, let us remember this responsibility we bear and pray for the strength to not be silent.

Psalm 103; Revelation 19:11-16; Matthew 1:18-25

Tuesday, January 2

Birthdays: Ed Bock, Jim Boyd, Donna Ritts

Prayers for: Harry & Mary Ellen Harrington; Bonnie Hartwell; Bill & Kris Heeter; Lois Henderson

John 6:1-14 When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, “Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted.” (v.12 NIV)

I love this verse. Jesus had just turned five loaves of bread and two fish into a meal for five thousand people, but he still made sure to tell his disciples to not waste anything. There are a few noteworthy things happening here. First, it's interesting (and a little funny, too) that Jesus had actually created a surplus of miracle food. This shows the magnitude of his powers, and the abundance of life that he brings. Second, it's seems very clear to me that Jesus is reinforcing the idea of responsible stewardship here. This extra food shouldn't be wasted—it could be in the stomachs of more people who are hungry, and Jesus takes this seriously. This shows me that I must be mindful of how I use my resources (especially what I have to spare), and not let it go to waste. Perhaps, from what I have been given, I could help those who do not have enough.

1 Kings 19:1-8; Psalm 34; Ephesians 4:1-16

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.

Wednesday, January 3

Birthdays: Paul Daigle, Kyra Huckaby, Donald Ishler

Prayers for: Carols & Ana Hernandez; Carron Hollenberg; Patrick & Susan Howard; Ben & Jeanette Hoyt; Ted & Shelly Huckaby, Kyra

1 Kings 19:9-18 After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. (v.12)

In this, perhaps one of the most famous Old Testament passages, I am reminded of the power, of the calm, of the peace that comes from being still and knowing that He is God (Psalm 46:10). In the tumultuous times of my life, I must remember to take a step back, let the noise fade into itself, and find the stillness and the quiet. In that place, I can remember my roots, and listen. It's difficult to hear a distinct voice in the wind, or in the earthquake, or in the fire. But in the quiet, I can hear the soft voice beckoning me to be calm, trust, and remember the peace that passes all understanding that is available to each of us. In this new year, let us take time to reflect, to find time for that quiet, and to listen.

Psalm 68; Ephesians 4:17-32; John 6:15-27

Thursday, January 4

Birthdays:

Prayers for: Roberto & Julie Huerta, Knox; Flor Ibarra; Ify Ibekwe; Angela Ireozo, Declan; Paul & Michele Isherwood, Andrew, Karen

Joshua 3:14—4:7 “In the future, when your children ask you, ‘What do these stones mean?’ tell them that the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord.” (vv.6b-7a)

It’s important to be reminded of things that happened in the past. Certain keepsakes can bring back memories of a wonderful moment, or perhaps of a sad day. Regardless, objects that remind of the past are powerful, and beckon us to reconsider where we have been, and where we are going. A theme of sorts for the week has become clear to me: time, and our place in it. The beginning of this year is a perfect opportunity to take a step back and remember the past, consider what we ought to do in the present, and look forward to the future.

Psalm 85, 87; Ephesians 5:1-20; John 9:1-12, 35-38

Friday, January 5

Birthdays: Gale Farquhar, Grace Kenney

Prayers for: Donald & Marilyn Ishler; Richard Jennings; Ted Jodzio; Cole & Kristen Johnson, Caleb; James & Billie Johnson; Jim & Vicki Jones

Jonah 2:2-9 He said: “In my distress I called to the LORD, and he answered me. From deep in the realm of the dead I called for help, and you listened to my cry.” (v.2)

This verse sums up the beauty of the knowledge that despite the fact that I am weak by myself, my call for help is heard. There is someone out there who is on my side. This knowledge is not only encouraging, but also empowering. It reminds me that I can take risks, that I can try newer and harder things. It means that no matter how hard things get, there is nothing that can separate me from the love of God (Romans 8). “From deep in the realm of the dead I called for help, and you listened to my cry.” Deep in the realm of the dead—that’s pretty far down. But even there, our calls for help are heard. Nowhere is too far. Let’s take comfort in that today, and throughout this new year.

Psalms 2, 110; Ephesians 6:10-20; John 11:17-27, 38-44

Saturday, January 6

Birthdays: Scotty Scott, Donna Settles, Erma Wetmore

Prayers for: Joe & Cathy Johnson; Judith Jordan; Joe & Penelope Kenney, Joshua, Aiden, Grace; Judy Kirk; Tiffany Kirkpatrick; Nancy Kison

Matthew 12:14-21 “In his name the nations will put their hope.” (v.21)

In this verse, adapted from in the original Isaiah 42:4, we are reminded once again of the universal hope that we can place in Jesus. At the end of the day, this is what faith is about—confidence and assurance in this hope despite the turbulence of life (Hebrews 11:1). The original passage in Isaiah was written generations before Jesus would walk the earth, yet those words still play a part in how we understand and contextualize the importance of Jesus. Part of the significance of Isaiah’s place and meaning in time came well after he was gone, beautifully illustrating this image of time once again. Let us reflect once more on how we are to use our precious time, and how to be still and know that He is God.

Isaiah 49:1-7; Psalms 46, 97; Revelation 21:22-27

Sunday, January 7

Birthdays: Manuel Aguilar, Bob Benning, Gabriela Gonzales, Yanelly Gonzales, Trace McMahon

Prayers for: Roger & Paula Koehler; Fr. Bill & Anthea Kotlan, Erin; Patsy Kotlan, Jay; Carolyn Krall; Nathan & Bonnie Kyser, Olivia, Elizabeth

Genesis 1:1—2:3 By the seventh day God finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done. (2:2-3 NIV)

During the previous six days God created the heavens and earth and everything in them. That does not sound like the Big Bang Theory to me. How many of us actually rest on the seventh day, the day of the Sabbath? “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27). I must confess I have not always rested. But when I do, the week begins much better. Notice that God the Creator merely spoke and things began to happen. “He is the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them—he remains faithful forever” (Psalm 146:6). A little boy was once asked, “What came first, the chicken or the egg?” He replied, “That’s easy, the chicken. God does not lay eggs.” Only Almighty God can make something out of nothing. Ponder that.

Psalms 146, 147; Ephesians 1:3-14; John 1:29-34

Thursday, January 25

Birthdays: Gene Chism, Fr. Oscar Gallego, Kathleen Staten

Prayers for: Troy & Brandi Spiess, Coltin, Gavin; Frank & Pat Stahl; Greg Staten; Kathleen Staten, William, Caroline; Lee & Dianna Stein

John 5:30-47 “You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have eternal life.” (vv.39-40)

There is such a difference in knowing God verses knowing about God. Through InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, I encounter college students who know a lot about God, but do not know Him. They think that by following the “rules” of Christianity, they are safe. It is not enough. Just as God has no need of sacrifices (Psalm 50), He rejects those who know about Him, but do not know Him. It is like reading a book about Tiger Woods and thinking that I know him, yet never having met him. It is true that I know about him, but I do not know him. Jesus calls us into relationship with Himself, not just to knowledge of Him. He is Father, Lover, and Friend. He is Comforter, Rescuer, and Healer. Beloved, may you know Christ intimately, deeply, and fully. May you not be satisfied with knowledge of God without meeting Him.

Genesis 16:15—17:14; Psalm 50; Hebrews 10:1-10

Friday, January 26

Birthdays: Fr. Stan Gerber

Prayers for: Julie Stevenson; Eric & Sylvia Stewart; Buddy & Diana Sullivan, Jeremy, Nicholas, Joshua, Olivia, Jacqueline; Anne Sundquist

Psalm 40 I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. (vv.1-2)

Today’s passages all say the same thing: there is hope in our faithful God. Don’t hope in yourself or in others, hope in God. In October 2004, I was suffering from severe depression—dropping 25 pounds and sleeping 4 hours per night. I felt despairing, hopeless, and even suicidal. Where was God? Why would He allow me to suffer so much? I cried out to a (seemingly) unresponsive God. My faith was useless; or so I thought. Then, one day I decided to believe God, not for healing or joy, but for who He is. I found a rock to stand on—Jesus Christ. The mire almost pulled me under, but beneath it I discovered solid ground. Beloved, wait in suffering. Seek the Lord, even if you don’t hear His answer. Believe in His faithfulness, even if doubting your own faith. He will answer your cry, not necessarily with immediate healing, but with Himself. And that is better than being happy!

Genesis 17:15-27; Psalm 54; Hebrews 10:11-25; John 6:1-15

Saturday, January 27

Birthdays: Evelyn Ault, Lourdes Aviles, Mary Karen Davis

Prayers for: Jeremy & Diane Sykes, Tyler; Fred & Charlotte Talley; Bill & Debbie Taylor, Katherine, Charlie, Bella; Linda Tervay

Genesis 18:1-16 Then the LORD said, “I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son.” Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him. Abraham and Sarah were already old and well advanced in years, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing. So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, “After I am worn out and my master is old, will I now have this pleasure?” (vv.10-12)

Is it any coincidence that Sarah’s son is named Isaac—meaning laughter? Sarah laughed at what the Lord said and then she lied to Him saying that she had not laughed. But God knew. Even more, He had already named Isaac before she laughed. In fact, what he said in verse 10 was true. Sarah did have a son named Isaac and with that son God established an everlasting covenant. What God says, He means. We could all learn from Sarah. God means it when He says not to lie, gossip, or lust. He means it when He says: “I am with you; I will never leave you or forsake you” (Joshua 1:5). God’s promises are sure. Maybe we should quit laughing and start taking him seriously.

Psalm 55; Hebrews 10:26-39; John 6:16-27

Sunday, January 28

Birthdays: Harry Harrington, Clayton Melanson

Prayers for: Jim & Elaine Tummy, Jack; Jose & Brenda Valencia; Dick & Marlene Van Horne; Pete Varney; George & Sandra Vick

Galatians 5:13-25 For the whole law can be summed up in this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” (v.14 NLT)

Love my neighbor as myself. How? What are the ways to put love into action and not get lost in my own woundedness and neediness? So many give love only to get love. Galatians 5 continues to teach: “let the Holy Spirit guide your lives” (16a); “the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions” (v.17b); “But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives; love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (v.22b). Again, Scripture is our teacher. I can’t love on my own. It’s Christ in me; it’s the Spirit in me. My job is to listen and obey. To be empowered I must receive the love of the Lord, love Him back, and pass that love along. First, I must receive so I have something to give.

Genesis 18:16-33; Psalms 24, 29; Mark 8:22-30

Sunday, January 21

Birthdays:

Prayers for: Aaron & Mary Scherzer, Simon, Amelia; Sarah Scherzer; Dennis & Rene Schiltz, McKenna, Brennan, Maggie; Jane Scholwinski

Galatians 2:1-10 As for those who seemed to be important—whatever they were makes no difference to me; God does not judge by external appearance—those men added nothing to my message. (v.6 NIV)

This morning I worked out at the gym with my best friend, Sarah. As I did my sit-ups (which really kill me!), Sarah said, “Play your own game.” “What are you talking about?” I asked her. She told me I am my only competitor. It’s not about looking as good or being as strong as anyone else. It’s my game. In Galatians, Paul defends his mission to the Gentiles before the Jerusalem council. They could have rejected his calling to the Gentiles, but they sent him back to continue spreading the gospel. Paul “played his own game,” confident that his only affirmation comes from God. We often spend our lives following Jesus, but glancing right and left to locate everyone else. I know that I’m guilty! But Jesus says, “Play your own game.” As Psalm 63 says, “Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you.” It’s about me and Jesus, no one else.

Genesis 13:2-18; Psalm 63; Mark 7:31-37

Monday, January 22

Birthdays: Pam Pavelka

Prayers for: Scotty Scott & Beth Dickinson; Ronnie & Lucy Sefcik; Grant & Heather Seiver, Wade, Mackenzie, Savannah, Isaac, Abigail, Luke

Hebrews 8:1-13 They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is seen in heaven. (v.5a)

Having recently joined the Altar Guild in preparing the church, I am constantly amazed at the beauty and intricacy of the Sanctuary. We polish the chalice and paten every week to make sure that everything shines for the glory of the Lord. I can only imagine what the Temple must have looked like, with ornate gold-laden altars, rich fabrics, and treasured symbols of the Jewish faith. Yet, they are only a shadow of what is in heaven. Can you imagine the splendor and beauty of that Heavenly Sanctuary? The Book of Revelation says an earthly Temple will not be needed after the second coming of Christ—God will make His dwelling with people in the Holy City. Part of my heart longs deeply for this coming. To know I am truly home, to see the face of God, to walk with him as Adam did, to see justice come to the earth, to not sin, to not sorrow! Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Genesis 14:1-24; Psalms 41, 52; John 4:43-54

Tuesday, January 23

Birthdays: Fisoye Delano, Wyatt Greenwood, Jackie Savacool

Prayers for: Warren & Donna Settles, Linden, Ethan, Deanna; Sandy Shackelford; Robbie & Merrie Sheltz; Valerie Shepherd

John 5:1-18 When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, “Do you want to get well?” (v.6)

A man beside a pool—38 years, paralyzed. Why would Jesus ask such a question: “Do you want to get well?” Of course he did—or did he? 38 years is a long time. What would life be like if he was well? Would it be painful? Would it be hard? How would he behave? Everything he had even known would change. Do you want to get well? In Exodus, the wandering Israelites wanted to go back to slavery in Egypt. In Southern states, slaves chose to stay with their masters, even after they were freed. Do you want to get well? Will you allow Jesus to heal you, even if it is painful, even if it is risky? It took a lot of faith for the invalid to stand on his feet, pick up his mat, and go home. Do you have that faith? Do you want to get well?

Genesis 15:1-11, 17-21; Psalm 45; Hebrews 9:1-14

Wednesday, January 24

Birthdays: Keith Armstrong

Prayers for: David Sierra & Nina Torres, Alondra, Andrea; Antonio & Lizbeth Sierravigas; Brenda Spiess, Lauren; Eric & Myschel Spiess, Kevin

Hebrews 9:15-28 For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant. (v.15)

I love the movie Man on Fire. One of the most powerful scenes is when Crease trades his own life for the life of a kidnapped little girl. He literally dies for her! That is what Christ did for us. We, too, were kidnapped—kidnapped by the serpent in the Garden of Eden. And we grew so used to living that way that we didn’t know how to live differently. Any action we took trying to redeem ourselves came up short, insufficient. The only way to ransom us from the kidnapper was with blood—perfect blood: “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” (v.22). A sacrifice was needed and the only one sufficient to take away the sins of the world was God Himself. Does that amaze you? Sometimes I get so used to hearing it that I am no longer awed by it! Just as Crease gave his life for Pita, Jesus gave his life for me, for us. Amazing!

Genesis 16:1-14; Psalm 119:49-72; John 5:19-29

Monday, January 8

Birthdays: Paul Leonard

Prayers for: Barbara Laake; Susan LaCoste; Tommy & Kathryn Lamb; Pat Landgren; Paul & Caye Lankford; Colwyn & Krista Lee, Katie, Sara

Genesis 2:4-25 But for Adam no suitable helper was found. So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. (vv.20b-22)

God had just finished bringing all the animals and livestock and birds to Adam to have him name them. But there was no suitable helper among them for Adam. So God put Adam in a deep sleep and created Eve from his rib, close to his heart. Not from his head to be above him, nor off his feet to be beneath him and be trampled upon. But from his side, under his arm, close to his heart, to be loved, honored, cherished, and protected. What would the world be like if we only practiced those few words? The two became one flesh. No matter how amicable it seems, when a couple divorces there is always pain. It is like taking a gaff hook, putting it in your forearm at the wrist and pulling it up to the elbow, tearing that one flesh. If there are children involved, it is even more painful. I have personal experience, twice. Ponder that.

Psalms 1, 2, 3; Hebrews 1:1-14; John 1:1-18

Tuesday, January 9

Birthdays: Charlotte Goetz, Leticia Salazar

Prayers for: Robert & Mary Legler; Paul & Stephanie Leonard; Sue Little; Linda Llewellyn; Chris & Diane Lolley, Lauren; Luz Longoria

Genesis 3:1-24 Now the serpent was craftier than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’” (v.1)

The Bible is either entirely true or entirely false. Only nonbelievers question its authenticity. The first three chapters of Genesis are a Reader’s Digest version of the entire Bible. God created everything including man. There is deception in the form of a serpent. There is disobedience when Adam and Eve ate from the tree in the center of the garden. There is works salvation when Adam and Eve sewed fig leaves together to try and hide their sin. But no secret is hidden from God. So, what they did is called the original sin or the Fall. We all have it because we are all descendants of theirs. I call it “sin the noun.” The sins we commit on a daily basis I call “sin the verb.” But, God knows there is no forgiveness of sin without the shedding of blood. So, He shed the blood of two animals and used the skins to clothe them. This points to the cross and man’s need of a Savior. In today’s world, people march to justify their sin. But that will not work either. I believe the Bible to be entirely true. Just because I do not understand it all does not mean it’s not true. Besides, it is not the parts I do not understand that concern me. It’s the parts I do understand that concern me. Ponder that.

Psalms 5, 6; Hebrews 2:1-10; John 1:19-28

Wednesday, January 10

Birthdays: Mike DiBiasio, Nina Torres

Prayers for: Gerald Lucky; Linda Lutkus, Lauren; Andrew & Sandy Mann, Marian, Maggie; Sid & Veronica Mann; Galen & Jody Mansee

John 1:29-42 “This is the one I meant when I said, ‘A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’” (v.30)

I paused when I read verse 30. How can someone come after you, but surpass you, because he was before you? The only way that is possible is if that person existed before you. He had to be the incarnate Jesus Christ. John the Baptist had been born of Elizabeth, the sister of Mary, about six months before Jesus. So, John the Baptist and Jesus were cousins. Jesus existed before the eternity past, became incarnate of the virgin Mary, and was born about six months after John the Baptist. Only an eternal God, a suffering Savior, and a powerful Holy Spirit could have pulled this off. John baptized with water, but Jesus was to baptize with the Holy Spirit. I cannot imagine where I would be if it had not happened that way. There would have been no miracle worker, teacher, nor Savior, no cross, no death and shedding of blood, no burial, no resurrection, no ascension, and no promise of coming again. But it did happen that way because we have a loving Father who gave his only Son, Jesus Christ, the sinless one, to die on the cross for our sins. Then he overcame death through his resurrection proving the power of God is greater than the power of the evil one. If you visit the grave site of any founder of any other world religion you will find their remains in the grave. But not so in the case of Jesus—there are no bones in the box. He’s alive. Ponder that.

Genesis 4:1-16; Psalm 119:1-24; Hebrews 2:11-18

Thursday, January 11

Birthdays: Wayne Ballentine, Blake Muskiet, Isaac Seiver

Prayers for: Fr. Nazir & Agnes Masih, Samia; Mike Mason; Mickey & Martha Ann Matkin; Jim Maxey & Barbara Garney; Javier Mayor

Psalm 18:1-20 The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. (v.2)

Where do you go when trouble strikes? We all have physical, emotional, mental, spiritual, financial, or personal issues from time to time. But we don’t have to carry any troubles, not since what happened at the cross. That is why Jesus came. He is our rock waiting for us to stand on him. He is our fortress protecting us from the enemy. On the cross in atonement he bore all our sins as the sinless lamb of God. He is our refuge; we can take shelter in him when times are tough. He is our shield, protecting us from the fiery darts of the evil one. For all who believe, trust, and obey him, he becomes the horn of our salvation. On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking, all other ground is sinking sand. How about you? Ponder that.

Genesis 4:17-26; Hebrews 3:1-11; John 1:43-51

Friday, January 12

Birthdays: Jesse Greenwood, Patrick Howard

Prayers for: Francesca MBA-Jonas, Rollins, Jacqlyne; Carol McBee; Ray & Carol McCauley; Nancy McCracken; Jim & Marty Medford

Hebrews 3:12-19 See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called “Today,” so that you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness. (vv.12-13)

Yesterday is a canceled check. There is nothing you can do to get it back. Tomorrow never comes, so why be concerned about it? It is always today, the present. It is a gift from God. Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as the Israelites did in the rebellion (when they left Egypt). What was the end result? The Israelites spent 40 years wandering in the desert. It makes no difference, Jew or Gentile; we are all to be obedient today. You cannot share in Christ if you have a hard heart. So, what do you do with the gift of today? Ponder that.

Genesis 6:1-8; Psalms 16, 17; John 2:1-12

Saturday, January 13

Birthdays: Christina Flower, Robert Legler

Prayers for: Clayton Melanson; Ernie Midgley; Dennis & Tacie Miller; Lois Miller; Valerie Minshall, Joshua, Will; Ignacio & Severina Munguia

Hebrews 4:1-13 “On the seventh day God rested from all his works.” (v.4b)

The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. I cannot tell you how many Sunday afternoons I have spent trying to catch up on work. Somehow, I never caught up. When I worked harder—when I should have—I didn’t have to spend Sunday afternoons trying to catch up. Life was easier and I never felt as much pressure to get something done. It is somewhat ironic how we spend 80% of our healthy young lives to accumulate enough for retirement. Then we spend 80% of our retirement trying to regain that health. Do you know anyone who, on his deathbed, said, “I wish I had spent more time at the office?” What will it take for you and I finally realize the Father knows best. We just need to learn to trust and obey Him. I bet we would find life much more enjoyable. Ponder that.

Genesis 6:9-22; Psalms 20, 21; John 2:13-22

Sunday, January 14

Birthdays:

Prayers for: Alex Musick; Jeff & Lisa Musick, Zach, Ben; Blake & Lauren Muskiet, Ethan, Parker; Bob & Barbara Myers; Gwen Nix

Mark 3:7-19 Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. (v.13 NIV)

This verse is a reminder to me that, just like the disciples, we are each called to do specific work in God’s kingdom. In simple form Jesus asked them to teach what he taught and to do what he did. Are you heeding his call? Some say faith without works is not a real faith. The difference I am trying to make here is that our deciding to do something and then asking Jesus to go along with it is not the same as seeking what he is calling us to do. He was specific with the apostles and, if you ask and listen, he will be specific in revealing what he would like you to do. I believe he calls each of us in a specific way, unique and purposeful. Ask him to reveal what he wants you to do.

Genesis 7:1-10, 17-23; Psalms 148, 149, 150; Ephesians 4:1-16

Monday, January 15

Birthdays: Suzanne Arnold

Prayers for: Frank Obi; Dele & Kemi Oduola, Francisca, Gabriel; Lizbeth Oviedo; Paul & Heather Palmer; Mike & Jane Pavelka, Pam, Nicholas

Genesis 8:6-22 After forty days Noah opened a window he had made in the ark and sent out a raven, and it kept flying back and forth until the water had dried up from the earth. (vv.6-7)

I marvel at God’s timing. I am always in a rush. I let my petitions be known and I expect a quick answer. Over time I have learned that better solutions sometimes come with patience. Because He does not answer quickly does not mean He is busy or doesn’t care. It might just mean He is moving some pieces for a better solution than we can ever imagine. Noah waited forty days—and, by the way, then another seven days. I can hardly wait 40 minutes. Allowing more time builds a strength that would not exist if everything would be answered in a few seconds. Learn to be patient. Learn to give a request some time. Learn to trust Him.

Psalms 25; Hebrews 4:14—5:6; John 2:23—3:15

Tuesday, January 16

Birthdays:

Prayers for: Chris & Meagan Patton, Christopher, Cohen; Liz Pearsey; John & Tracy Pegues; Matthew & Ginger Phillips, William, Isabelle

Psalms 26 I abhor the assembly of evildoers and refuse to sit with the wicked. (v.5)

I admit that it is difficult for me to be around some people. It is much more fun to be with someone with whom I agree or with persons who share similar views. This verse seems to give one cover for those types of relationships or actions. The difference that I have come to understand is that we are called to witness to everyone and to spend some time with those we might not find acceptable. We don’t need to agree to their positions nor do we need to join them in other ways of living. But we cannot keep God’s light under a bushel either. Grow with a discernment in reaching out to those with whom you disagree in hopes that you can demonstrate a love that might end up being attractive to them someday. Being in a comfortable group is not where God wants us every day. We won’t spread His gospel in that way. We need to be available to get out of our comfort zone if we want to do His work.

Genesis 9:1-17; Psalm 28; Hebrews 5:7-14; John 3:16-21

Wednesday, January 17

Birthdays: Kate Williams

Prayers for: Jose Pineda; June Powell; Steve & Carol Powell; Susan Pride; John & Sunny Pugliese; Mike & Cecelia Railey; Fernanda Ramirez

Hebrews 6:1-12 Therefore let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God. (v.1)

Many theologians use this verse to enter the discussion about whether one can lose their faith. I understand that discussion, but read this verse in another way. Am I growing my faith by looking for teaching that is beyond the elementary level? I want to read the Bible more, but don’t seem to accomplish as much as I would like. I continue to find more and more wisdom, more and more enlightenment as I read the Bible—and even as I write these commentaries. I claim to want more discernment and more understanding, but I have come to realize that I have not moved beyond some elementary teachings in many ways. My challenge to you—and to myself—is to get busy in reading Scripture and looking for advanced teaching. We are not called to stay at the milk stage, we are called to advance to some meat.

Genesis 9:18-29; Psalm 38; John 3:22-36

Thursday, January 18

Birthdays: Lauren Spiess

Prayers for: David & Carol Ray; Tony & Nema Redding; Alan & Jan Rendl; Corey & Sloane Ritts, Declan, Elyn; Ted & Donna Ritts, Eric

Genesis 11:1-9 Then they said, “Come let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves; otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth.” (v.4)

This story continues to be a great example of man building a temple unto himself. In many ways—some not as noticeable as a tower—I look for ways to edify myself. We all have our temples, and most are not pleasing to our God. When they are tall, like the Tower of Babel, they tend to be easy to spot. But other ways, like wanting to get or take the credit, wanting to always set the agenda, always wanting a result, or not wanting to just be a part of the process are just as destructive. Those signs of control might be just as big as the tower. I find it humorous, at times, that it seems all I am asking for is enough of something so I don’t need to rely on Jesus any more. Ironic? Well, our towers and wanting to make a name for ourselves can run counter to effective ministry and witness. We start striving for our relevance and miss God’s significance. Examine your motives; review your actions from time to time. Be honest with why you are doing some things. Lord, create in us a clean heart and then send us out to do Your will, not ours.

Psalms 37:1-18; Hebrews 6:13-20; John 4:1-15

Friday, January 19

Birthdays: Elizabeth Cavazos

Prayers for: Martha Rodabaugh, Lauren, Cassie; Kathy Rohm; David Ronkainer; Anthony & Debbie Ross, Landen; Al Rosso

Psalms 31 But I trust in you, LORD; I say, “You are my God.” My times are in your hands; deliver me from the hands of my enemies, from those who pursue me.” (vv.14-15)

Trusting God seems easy at first. My experience has been that it can be difficult. I trust—but I grow weary very easily and very quickly. As I look back, many difficulties in my life either weren’t as dire as Satan would have had me believe or, over time, they became insignificant. But, at the time, I was thoroughly distressed and felt that Lord had left me standing alone. I have come to appreciate that if all problems were to be answered quickly, I would not have strengthened my faith. I would have just continued to expect quick answers and quick solutions. Both of those approaches rob us of better answers and better insight—because both of those come with time, not quickness. So, how does God teach us? How does he get us to grow? Maybe sometimes by giving us a more difficult problem or by not answering quickly. Slower answers have helped me develop patience and to wait on Him for better solutions. Most of the time, quick answers are just my answers—not His. We need to learn to be patient, grow with endurance, and use difficulties as a means of strengthening our faith. It is a long race, not a sprint.

Genesis 11:27—12:8; Hebrews 7:1-17; John 4:16-26

Saturday, January 20

Birthdays:

Prayers for: Horacio & Leticia Salazar Jr, Manuel, Elizabeth, Horacio, Victor, Santos; Dick & Jackie Savacool; Charles & Jennifer Scherzer

Hebrews 7:18-28 The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless (for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God. (vv.18-19)

This verse has really caught my attention. At first, one can focus on the fact that this writing is about how the old law was not sufficient to accomplish God’s saving purpose, and that ultimately it was only Jesus’s work on the cross that brought us to the perfection God wanted. But with his death came the reality that we now have a true fellowship with God and, through the power of the Holy Spirit, we have direct communication with Him through Christ. My challenge is: How is a better hope introduced? I feel we move closer to God through prayer, worship, meditation, and reading Scripture. We can’t just sit in the chair and do nothing. That, to me, is an empty faith. The method by which we draw nearer to God is by worshiping Him, learning more about Him, communicating with Him, and by taking time to listen for His counsel and wisdom. Laws and regulations are gone; they are replaced with a live link. Get connected.

Genesis 12:9—13:1; Psalms 30, 32; John 4:27-42