

Monday, May 28

Birthdays: Jackie Austin

Prayers for: Jorge & Elizabeth Cavazos, Arianna; Emile & Lynn Champion; Travis & Shelia Chandler; Greg & Joan Chapman; Alex Cisneros

Proverbs 10:1-12 People with integrity walk safely, but those who follow crooked paths will be exposed. (v.9)

On the days I find myself anxious and unsettled, I know there’s something in me that has compromised with darkness. Whether it’s a deliberate action, taking matters into my own hands, or believing a lie, not having the inner-safety that comes from walking with the Lord is what tells me I’m in need of an adjustment. The more I fall in love with Jesus and dwell in friendship with him, the more I find safety in walking in his ways. Loving Him inspires me to be the same person when I’m in the midst of a crowd or hidden in a cave. I do not have to fear what might be exposed. I have come to the light and have broken agreement with shame. Loving Jesus is the safest place I’ve ever known.

Psalm 25; 1 Timothy 1:1-17; Matthew 12:22-32

Tuesday, May 29

Birthdays: Linda Lutkus, Agnes Masih, Francisca Oduola, Lee Stein

Prayers for: Gene & Genevieve Chism; Keith & Lisa Coe; Leon Collier; Allan & Sue Cox; Robert & Caroline Craze; Robin Cross, Edward

Proverbs 15:16-33 Fear of the LORD teaches wisdom; humility precedes honor. (v.33)

A while back, I decided to do the unthinkable. I decided to come clean—completely. No matter how excruciatingly painful my decision was going to require of me, I chose to get rid of all of my shame. And the only way I knew how to do so, was to intentionally tell the people I would feel most shameful towards the darkest secrets of my life. So, after many years of my parents not knowing my past sins, I sat them down and told them everything. I mean, everything. And with tears in their eyes and love overflowing from their hearts, they looked at me and said, “Janae, we love you. We’re not mad at you. We forgive you.” That day God revealed to me the beauty of mercy. Though they had every reason to look at me differently, shun me, scold me...my parents met me with compassion and forgiveness. They met me with love that I did not deserve.

Psalms 26, 28; 1 Timothy 1:18—2:8; Matthew 12:33-42

Wednesday, May 30

Birthdays: Colwyn Lee

Prayers for: Consuelo Cecilia Cruz; Mike & Kay Daigle, Paul, Peter, Kaylee; Rana Dannaoui, Amir, Lynn; Bill & Caroline Davies; Dorie Dawson

Matthew 12:43-50 “When an evil spirit leaves a person, it goes into the desert, seeking rest but finding none. Then it says, ‘I will return to the person I came from.’ So it returns and finds its former home empty, swept, and in order.” (vv.43-44)

For those of you who are anything like me, you’ve probably read this verse and found yourself a bit perplexed—especially considering the following verse that says the evil spirit goes and finds seven of its friends! This passage has always left me intimidated. Which is why I knew my interpretation was clearly not of the Lord. Recently, the Holy Spirit highlighted a word to me I had never noticed before. Empty. The spirit finds its former home...empty! This was when I had to ask myself this question: How many of us spend our lives trying to chase evil out, but never learn how to fill ourselves back up with the light? Walking in freedom goes far beyond chasing evil out. We need to not only expose the darkness, but immerse ourselves in the light—and his name is Jesus! Filling ourselves up with the presence of Jesus is where sustainable freedom is found.

Proverbs 17:1-20; Psalm 38; 1 Timothy 3:1-16

Thursday, May 31

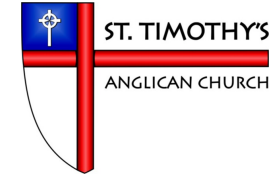
Birthdays: Donna Grove

Prayers for: Mary Karen Davis; Shane & Kristina Dear, Jacob, Lauren; Susan Decker; Fisoeye & Solape Delano; Art & Peggy DePue

Proverbs 21:30—22:6 The horse is prepared for the day of battle, but the victory belongs to the LORD. (v.31)

Reading this verse, I can’t help but ask myself this: What is my horse? In other words, what do I prepare for my day of battle? Is it my savings account? My health? My physical appearance? My wisdom? Even deeper, in whom (or what) do I place my hope? Far too often I place my confidence upon my “horse”—or my earthly circumstances and tangible resources. And though none of these things are inherently bad, I have recurrently learned that nothing in this world could ever protect me like the Lord does. When I finally lay my subconscious attempts to feel in “control” at the Lord’s feet, He goes before me and shields my way. He loves to defy all earthly circumstances and prove that victory truly does belong to Him—and Him alone.

Psalm 37:1-18; 1 Timothy 4:1-16; Matthew 13:24-30



ST. TIMOTHY'S TIMES DAILY DEVOTIONAL READING

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

Tuesday, May 1

Birthdays: McKenna Schiltz

Prayers for: Lois Miller; Valerie Minshall, Joshua, Will; Christi Morris, Lucy; Ignacio & Severina Munguia

Leviticus 16:20-34 He is to lay both hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites—all their sins—and put them on the goat’s head. He shall send the goat away into the wilderness in the care of someone appointed for the task. The goat will carry on itself all their sins to a remote place; and the man shall release it in the wilderness. (vv.21-22 NIV)

Who broke that? “So and so did.” Who left the security gate open? “What’s his name did it.” Why is that out of plumb? “The manufacturer allows tolerances.” Etc. etc. Scapegoats are just as abundant on construction sites as they are everywhere else. The scapegoats come in from the wilderness and mess various things up and leave the premises, never to be found again. When something goes wrong everyone points at the person who is not in the room as the culprit. I was, and still am, pretty good at finding a scapegoat to duck my offenses as well. I am in awe that my sins and shortcomings were, and are continually, laid at the cross and that Christ removes my transgressions as far as the east is from the west. Today we thank You, Lord, for forgiving us and for offering Your powerful and unconditional love that covers all our sins and shortcomings.

Psalms 61, 62; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11; Matthew 6:7-15

Wednesday, May 2

Birthdays: Cole Johnson, Heather Seiver, Bill Taylor

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

Leviticus 19:1-18 The LORD said to Moses, “Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: ‘Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy.’” (v.1)

This statement is followed by some very wise instructions for all people to strive to achieve. Respect your father and mother, don’t deceive one another, don’t lie, be fair, don’t steal, don’t gossip, and don’t seek revenge or bear a grudge, are among them. God says, “Don’t do it!” These aren’t mere suggestions. He doesn’t tell Moses to discuss why these things aren’t good for us. God isn’t into negotiating, He is holy, and He is the sovereign King of Kings! He knows that by abiding in His word we will set ourselves apart from the world’s ways. The Old Testament seems so harsh sometimes, but the truth is, it has to be. We fight to justify our behavior, we behave badly when we are wounded, and we have old patterns that are so hard to break. The hard truth is that they will never produce the fruits of the Spirit that God so wants for us to have. We are called to obey His word! He knows that we will fail miserably, but He also knows the good that will come from us by simply aspiring to be holy and to seek His ways. God will take care of our short falls as we repent and grow in our relationship with Him. He has given us instruction through His Word and the Trinity, which is a gift beyond words to embrace.

Psalm 72; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28; Matthew 6:19-24

Thursday, May 3

Birthdays:

Prayers for: Gwen Nix; Frank Obi; Dele & Kemi Oduola, Francisca, Gabriel; Ruby & Trisha Ortiz; Paul & Heather Palmer; Liz Pearsey

Matthew 6:25-34 “Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?” (v.27 NLT)

Worrying is an easy but unproductive path to take when problems arise. Early in my career, before I was cognitive of risk and reality, I was eager to chase all sorts of business transactions. Eventually, I began to realize that I was in over my head with work, commitments, and capacity. At first, I would worry and ask myself, “What about this outcome? What if that happens? Could this come to be?” After a while I found that worry did not work very well, and was not effective in helping me solve life’s problems. My wife Lisa and I began going to our church’s Tuesday night healing service to worship, pray, and enjoy the fellowship of others. The healing service bore a genuine example of people who knew how to cast their cares on Jesus and live in his sovereignty. I strive daily to pray and surrender my life and problems to Christ’s control. I am a work in progress, yielding is not natural. I want to put my all worries at the foot of the cross. I am seeing that Christ can move mountains of worry, and the more I yield to him the more peaceful I become. Come to him all that are weary and burdened and he will give us rest.

Leviticus 19:26-37; Psalms 70, 71; 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12

Friday, May 4

Birthdays: Paula Koehler

Prayers for: Chris & Meagan Patton, Christopher, Cohen; Mike & Jane Pavelka, Pam, Nicholas; John & Tracy Pegues; Jose Pineda

Psalm 106:1-18 Then they believed his promises and sang his praise. But they soon forgot what he had done and did not wait for his plan to unfold. (vv.12-13 NIV)

There are days when multiple problems seem to collide. The phone prescreens an irritating person calling in; multiple text messages arrive simultaneously announcing a difficult situation; emails alert you of pressing other needs. The sometimes “mental beat down” flows into the physical. It is interesting that everything we need to combat this discouragement is available—and just a thought and prayer away from our reach. The reading today from Psalms 106 shows how quickly the Israelites, like myself, forget about the power of God. The power to push aside the temporal confusion and cares of the world is instantaneously available through our connection and relationship with Christ. Why don’t we wait for Christ to lead and guide us? When the self-murmuring starts, our focus should be on seeking the Lord and casting all our cares on him. He’s always there for us.

Leviticus 23:1-22; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17; Matthew 7:1-12

Saturday, May 5

Birthdays:

Prayers for: Matthew & Ginger Phillips, William, Isabelle; June Powell; Steve & Carol Powell; Susan Pride; Mike & Cecelia Railey

2 Thessalonians 3:1-18 May the Lord lead you into a greater understanding of God’s love and the endurance that is given by Christ. (v.5 GNT)

In Matthew 7:13-14, we are told, “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.” This is not a warm and fuzzy Scripture. This is in red letters in my Bible. These are the words of Jesus. In its simplest terms, there is a good side and a bad side. One has a narrow entry and the other is wide. The wide gate can be viewed as those who have chosen not to believe in Christ. It may also include those who believe that all people are good and there are lots of Gods, and if you are good, you will have eternal life with one of them. It could also include those who believe that going to church and doing good deeds—without having a relationship with Jesus—is sufficient to enter the narrow gate. I think about Peter and Judas. They were Jesus’ friends and disciples, walking with him daily and yet, when it came down to choosing, oh, how hard it was for them. The good side, the narrow gate, presents quite a challenge in so many ways, but will lead us to life. I pray for all who haven’t chosen the narrow. And I pray for those of us who have, to be strengthened in faith to be able stand for Christ at all times. I pray, too, for God’s truth to be ever present in this world; that He continues to beckon those walking both the narrow and the wide.

Leviticus 23:23-44; Psalms 75, 76; Matthew 7:13-21

Sunday, May 6

Birthdays: Wade Fennel, Charles Scherzer, Olivia Sullivan

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

James 1:2-8, 16-18 If you don’t know what you’re doing, pray to the Father. He loves to help. (v.5 The Message)

“Help, Lord! What words of comfort and wisdom can I give her from You?” was my prayer when a friend asked me to pray for her father. His surgery had several unexpected complications. Knowing that her faith in Christ was young, and that she trusted me, was overwhelming. I wanted her to trust God in a deeper way. “Be joyful always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus” (1 Thessalonians 5:18) was the Scripture that was provided. “Hardly helpful, Lord,” I said. “You know my friend doesn’t understand You very well and might blame You if her dad’s healing doesn’t go well.” Praying over my friend, I asked for a new knowledge of the presence, power, and will of God. I encouraged her to call for His help and watch what He was doing in everything that related to her father’s medical treatment. And, that is exactly what happened. She came to trust and depend fully on the Lord, as her father’s hospitalization and rehabilitation lasted several months.

Leviticus 25:1-7; Psalms 93, 96; Luke 12:13-21

Monday, May 7

Birthdays:

Prayers for: Ted & Donna Ritts, Eric; Martha Rodabaugh, Lauren, Cassie; Kathy Rohm; David Ronkainer; Debbie Ross, Landen; Al Rosso

Colossians 1:9-14 For he has reduced us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (vv.13-14 NIV)

Redemption is what we receive when redeem happens because of our Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Ponder that for a bit. I always understood the facts about Christ dying on the cross for me to cleanse me of my sins and to give me eternal life in him. My vision was: Jesus as Kinsman-Redeemer offering himself in exchange for my bad stuff. He took that bad stuff, providing me freedom, allowing me to make new life choices in him, and offering me an open invitation to repent again—whenever. Although there is some accuracy in those facts, I had the wrong focus. Several Easters ago, in the thinking of the amazing love of my suffering Redeemer, I experienced his love. Experiencing his love and thinking about his love are not the same thing. Experiencing his love brings me life, allows me to share it with others, and makes me crave more. My prayer is that we all continue to grow in the experiential love of Christ, in us and around us, always and in all ways.

Leviticus 25:35-55; Psalm 80; Matthew 13:1-16

Thursday, May 24

Birthdays: Sue Little

Prayers for: Martin & Kyla Bayang, Martin, Vicki; Bob & Mary Benning; Steve & Nanette Benoit; Anne Birkhead; Ed & Zonia Bock

Matthew 11:25-30 I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. (v.25)

I recently listened to a talk on “ideas that helped to shape the world.” One of the topics was religion. Their conclusions were based on a study of the history of mankind. They stated that all religions were created to satisfy mankind’s deep psychological need for a moral life, charity, seeking a mothering relationship, or dealing with the fear of death. They concluded all religions are delusional. The proof was stated through geological findings. The Bible was found irrelevant—being only 6,000 years old while the earth is 4.5 billion years old. They believed medicine and science provide the only reasonable answers for mankind. Furthermore, art could replace man’s need for religion. They said the life of Jesus was a good simple moral example of the life we should aspire to live and that mankind, through his cleverness, has always created a way to keep hope alive and to cope with his needs. In today’s sermon, our preacher presented our Christian counterpoint for what shaped the world. He reminded us how we believe in justification by faith. This began with God’s relationship with Abraham. In the Old Testament, Abraham was counted righteous through his faith in God (Romans 4:3). In my long lifetime as a scientist/veterinarian, it has been my experience that science and medicine only help to strengthen my faith. They prove to me God’s wisdom is the only explanation for the great mysteries of His creation. He is the great healer and we are fearfully and wonderfully made.

Proverbs 7:1-27; Psalm 18:1-20; I John 5:13-21

Friday, May 25

Birthdays:

Prayers for: Jim & Kathy Boggs, Chris; Ruby Bosh, JB; Sharon Boyah; Bob & Bonnie Boyce; Frank & Cheri Boyd; Jim & Carolyn Boyd

Matthew 12:1-14 And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit upon the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? (v.11)

Again, as a veterinarian, I notice the many times Jesus uses animals metaphorically to teach his lessons. In this case, he uses the value of one sheep to explain the healing of a man’s paralyzed hand on the Sabbath. Probably, the most quoted sheep proverb is that of the Good Shepherd in Psalm 23. It is often of comfort in my visits with parishioners in the hospital or homebound. As I write this, my best friend in vet school has just told me about untangling the legs of two lambs that had a difficult delivery last night. Twinning is very common with sheep. They both died because they called him too late, but he saved the mother. Sheep are “predator” animals, like cattle and horses. This means they are fearful. Without a shepherd to protect them and take care of all their needs, they are vulnerable to many parasites and diseases. They need a lot of care. If one is missing, as in this parable, it might be that it had rolled over and was on its back and couldn’t get up. If the shepherd didn’t search and find them, they would die or a predator would kill them. Often, when I find myself overwhelmed with worries and fear, reciting the 23rd Psalm will give me the same peace the sheep must feel with the security of their protective shepherd and his faithful companion, the sheepdog.

Proverbs 8:1-21; Psalms 16, 17; 2 John 1-13

Saturday, May 26

Birthdays:

Prayers for: Nettie Briggs; Bob & Diann Brooke; David & Janice Brookes, Philip; Bruce & Jane Brough; Tom Burgess; David & Betsy Burns

Matthew 12:15-21 Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall show justice to the Gentiles. (v.18)

This Scripture was Isaiah’s prophesy. In May of 2004, my wife and I took a pilgrimage to the Holy Land of Israel. We went with a group of Messianic Jewish Christians from Koi Dali church in Tennessee. We were guided by an excellent Jewish/Christian woman and their church’s Rabbi. We also had as a teacher an Episcopal priest who formerly served at our church in Florida. On our trip, we definitely walked in the footsteps of Jesus. But with our Messianic Jewish friends, there were some special memories different from the traditional tours. The tension between the Jewish and Muslim people was apparent when my wife and I took a side trip as Gentiles to visit the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. At this time in history, I was surprised to hear of the small number of Jewish believers in Jerusalem. Not unlike the number of Christian believers in America. Today’s scripture, reminds me that the gospel tells us Jesus became the truth for both communities of faith.

Proverbs 8:22-36; Psalms 20, 21; 3 John 1-15

Sunday, May 27

Birthdays: Valerie Fennel

Prayers for: Nita Burrer, Jason; Brian & Gail Cahill; Bob & Mary Capps; Otto Carl; Wayne & Debby Carpenter; Tim Caudill, Keegan

Acts 8:14-25 When Simon saw that the Spirit was given when the apostles laid their hands on people, he offered them money to buy this power. “Let me have this power, too,” he exclaimed, “so that when I lay my hands on people, they will receive the Holy Spirit!” (vv.18-19 NLT)

Have you ever found yourself thinking like Simon did? I know I’ve had numerous occasions where I have caught myself being more attracted to the power of God upon one’s life, rather than the presence of God Himself. Unfortunately, I can relate wholeheartedly to the story of Simon. In the midst of my learning though, I’ve discovered that while walking in the power of God is attractive, we were created to live in communion with His presence first and foremost! If we seek His power apart from dwelling in His presence, we are taking the fast-track, headed straight into burnout. Dwelling in God’s presence is my home. Walking in His power is a beautiful added bonus!

Proverbs 9:1-12; Psalms 148, 149, 150; Luke 10:25-28, 38-42

Sunday, May 20

Birthdays: John Zacharias

Prayers for: David York; John & Kathryn Zacharias; Norma Abrams; Philemon & Susan Abuogo, Amani; Eric & Maria Anderson, Nicole, Ashley
Acts 4:18-21, 23-33 And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness. (v.31 KJV)

Yesterday I attended a YMCA mission committee meeting for volunteer chaplains. We were reminded of the mission statement of the YMCA—which is to put Jesus Christ central. In fact, the YMCA seal states its purpose by including the words “John XVII 21” (or, as we would commonly write it, John 17:21) which reads, “that they may all be one...as we are one.” My “Y” story began at YMCA Camp Clearfork which was in a beautiful national forest near Hot Springs, Arkansas. As a camp counselor working with young boys for two summers, I learned to love nature and how important it was to teach the Y core values for character development. Many years ago, a church friend asked me to join the YMCA’s Christian Awareness Committee. This is now called the YMCA Mission Committee. Over time, it seemed to me the “Y” had lost some of its “Christian awareness,” so I was excited to see that the downtown “Y” had hired an Executive Director of Christian Initiatives and Community Partnerships. This includes a volunteer Chaplain program. Their goal was to demonstrate the love of Christ by serving and caring for the members, staff, and volunteers. As I sat there at this meeting of fellow Christian volunteers, we were encouraged through the speakers’ teaching and prayers. I believe we experienced what today’s Scripture described in the early church. Please pray for the Holy Spirit to anoint these chaplains to represent Christ boldly in the YMCA mission. They warned us there will be resistance!

Deuteronomy 16:9-12; Psalm 118; John 4:19-26

Monday, May 21

Birthdays: Ray McCauley, Julie Stevenson, Clare Willoughby

Prayers for: Cathy Arellano, Chance; Keith & Martha Armstrong; Suzanne Arnold; Gwen Arora; Cody & Rachel Ault, Alex, Evelyn

Proverbs 3:11-20 Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. (v.13)

As a young graduate veterinarian, my first employment came in Miami, Florida with an older vet who was a pioneer in Florida small animal veterinary medicine. He trained many young vets in his lifetime and was an astute businessman. He had us working nights at the greyhound dog racing tracks, which paid our salaries, and days at his busy downtown animal hospital for experience. At the end of my year of internship, I interviewed him about his career for an article I wrote for our state journal. One thing I asked him was if he had a personal faith. He told me he was a Christian and had a Bible next to his bed, with his favorite Scripture being Proverbs 3:5-6. That verse became my favorite also, and it is much like today’s verse. At another time, I also interviewed another Florida pioneer veterinarian—also in the later stages of his career. When I asked him the same question, he denied that he had any personal faith. I am thankful to have followed the first mentor in my life now—53 years later.

Psalms 1, 2, 3; I John 3:18—4:6; Matthew 11:1-6

Tuesday, May 22

Birthdays: Emma DiBiasio, David Ray

Prayers for: Jeff & Sandi Arora, Ty, Trace, Claire, TJ, Tatum; Jackie Austin; Jon Austin; Lizzie Austin, Zedane; Lourdes Aviles, Lance

1 John 4:7-21 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. (v.7)

In my study Bible, it tells me the book of 1 John is a family letter from the Father to the little children who are in the world. My wife and I recently went to the Christian movie The Shack, which I related to on a personal level because of my own background with an abusive father. God’s love and answered prayers got me through those tough times. Later in life, God allowed me to reconcile the relationship with my father and heal my fear and hatred of him, like in the book and movie. As a veterinarian, I have always noticed a lot of unconditional love expressed through little children and our “furry children.” They both exhibit the child-like faith, trust, and love Jesus said we must have too. With God’s gift of grace, we can become like them. When God told Adam to name all the animals in Genesis 2:19, I’m sure it was not an accident that “God” spelled backwards was “dog.” In my exam room, I had a sign with Peanuts reminding us that our dog loves us when no one else does—just like Jesus.

Proverbs 4:1-27; Psalms 5, 6; Matthew 11:7-15

Wednesday, May 23

Birthdays: Carron Hollenberg

Prayers for: Fehintolu Babayemi, Oluwabukunmi David, Oluwafolawemi Anne; Wayne Ballentine; Maria Del Carmen Bastard; Harry Berry

Proverbs 6:1-19 My son, if thou be surety for thy neighbor, if thou hast struck thy hand with a stranger, Thou art snared with the words of thy mouth, thou art taken with the words of thy mouth. (vv.1-2)

Have you ever read something in the Bible and had no idea what they were talking about? That happened to me this week, doing this writing. I have always read the King James Version of the Bible at the recommendation of an older mentor and brother in Christ. With the Proverbs passage above, however, I had to go to my One Year Bible for interpretation, because the language of the KJV was so difficult for me to understand. Here’s what learned, and I’ll pass it on to you. (1) Don’t co-sign a loan—but if you do, get out of it quickly. (2) Take a lesson from the ants and don’t be lazy. (3) Don’t lie or be a trouble maker. And (4) the seven things the Lord hates are: a proud person, a lying tongue, killing the innocent, a heart that plots evil, pursuing wrong, being a false witness, and sowing discord among brothers. Now I understand it, and think I know why God wants us to study His word. Good thing we’ve got the Holy Spirit to help us interpret and practice it—isn’t it?

Psalm 119:1-24; 1 John 5:1-12; Matthew 11:16-24

Tuesday, May 8

Birthdays: Kevin Fennell

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

1 Timothy 2:1-6 Pray especially for rulers and their governments to rule well so we can be quietly about our business of living simple, in humble contemplation. (v.2 The Message)

Paul is reminding us we can help God change the world through prayer. Then, he asks us to pray for our rulers and their governments—not to accomplish their desires, but the desires of God’s heart and will. Consider your own current national and local political scene. Do you see harmony, transformation, thought sharing, finding common ground, honesty, legislation that makes your world a better place by focusing on the will and heart of God? If so, thank you for praying. If not, let’s start praying with the right focus. I appreciate Paul’s exhortation as some of the current political issues have been very divisive in my community and my friendships. Praying with the focus on God’s heart desires and will has given me much peace here. The situations are complex and confusing, but now I am trusting God and waiting on Him to guide and direct.

Leviticus 26:1-20; Psalm 78:1-39; Matthew 13:18-23

Wednesday, May 9

Birthdays: Kathy Boggs

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

Psalm 119:97-120 I shiver in awe before you; your decisions leave me speechless with reverence. (v.120)

Shivering awe and speechless with reverence is a God event I welcome with delight. How about you? With my first grandchild’s birth approaching, I prayed that Jesus would welcome him upon his arrival and that his parents would be aware of it. He was there, in ways that I had not asked, thought, or imagined. During labor, an acute issue was identified requiring emergency intervention. My husband and I jumped on a 3-hour flight not knowing what awaited us. Upon landing, and on the way to the hospital, fear arose in me. How was my daughter, her husband, and their son? What would we discover at the hospital? I prayed in that taxi and was immediately flooded with a sense of peace. Then, a small portion of a Cherubim angel’s wing, with feathers moving up and down, and movement like breath in and out, covered my visual sight. Our awesome God and His angels were there. Speechless with reverence for an awesome God is an event I pray everyone anticipates and experiences daily.

Leviticus 26:27-42; Ephesians 1:1-10; Matthew 22:41-46

Thursday, May 10

Birthdays: Bob Brooke

Prayers for: Michael & Rachel Schwandt; Scotty Scott & Beth Dickinson; Ronnie & Lucy Sefcik; Sandy Shackelford; Valerie Shepherd

Matthew 28:16-20 Then Jesus came to them and said “All authority on heaven and earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (vv.18-19 NIV)

My grandson was baptized recently. This phrase from the sacramental rite was imprinted on all of our hearts that day: “You are sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ’s own forever” (BCP). My grandson’s face lit up with joy. We all rejoiced. We have all renewed our commitment to help him see and know Jesus, to whom he belongs forever. How do we help him know and see Jesus? How do we foster the wonder and anticipation of the love and power of Jesus? We can talk about it, but how about helping him experience the love of Jesus first hand? My daughter had such an opportunity recently. As she was watching him play, he reached for George, his 5-foot stuffed giraffe/friend, for help standing. They both promptly tumbled over with a thud. My grandson knew he was involved in George’s tumbling and was frightened and screaming for help. He needed help processing this event and reassurance that all was ok. Thankfully, my daughter was there. May we all keep our eyes and hearts open to show the love of Christ to others and may we miss no opportunities.

Daniel 7:9-14; Psalms 8, 47; Hebrews 2:5-18

Friday, May 11

Birthdays: Dick Van Horne

Prayers for: Grant & Heather Seiver, Wade, Mackenzie, Savannah, Isaac, Abigail, Luke; Warren & Donna Settles, Linden, Ethan, Deanna

1 Samuel 2:1-10 There is no one holy like the LORD. (v.2a)

This verse is early in Hannah’s prayer and declares God’s sovereignty and thanksgiving for His provision. Hannah knew the Lord’s holiness because in her anguish and grief over her inability to conceive, she prayed. Hannah was sanctified—made holy—by believing, obeying, and applying words of truth from the Lord. Hannah was the mother of Samuel: judge, priest, and prophet. Jesus prayed for all of us just before his betrayal: “Sanctify them by your truth; your word is truth” (John 17:17). Jesus’ promise, confirmed in Hannah’s testimony, opens a door for amazing opportunity in prayer. We can go straight to the Lord in prayer and hear what He wants us to know or to do. That is what God desires each of us to do—all the time. That is the definition of a personal relationship with the Lord. And, that kind of interaction grows more intimate and precious with each interaction. Sending a thank you note to the Lord is so good. But, sitting with Him and pouring out your love and thanks is exquisite. Just see.

Psalms 85, 86; Ephesians 2:1-10; Matthew 7:22-27

Saturday, May 12

Birthdays:

Prayers for: Robbie & Merrie Sheltz; David Sierra & Nina Torres, Alondra, Andrea; Troy & Christy Smith; Brenda Spiess, Lauren

Psalm 90 A thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night. (v.4)

This prayer from Moses is a clear reminder that God is not on my timetable. Time is different for Him. I respect His clock; His timing for me is always perfect. So, why my impatience? Moses gives us a clue later in the Psalm: “Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days” (v.14). I regret to admit that my impatience was a barrier to receiving the truth of this verse for many years. My focus needed to be realigned to God’s vision and perspective. I needed to open my ears and heart to trust His truths. I needed to affirm that He delights in being who He is for me. I needed to be ready for the unexpected blessings He has. As Moses says, I needed to be ready for His unfailing love every morning with singing and gladness. Being glad is the best part, for sure.

Numbers 11:16-17, 24-29; Psalm 87; Ephesians 2:11-22; Matthew 7:28—8:4

Sunday, May 13

Birthdays: Sal Doceti, Cheryl Strickland

Prayers for: Eric & Myschel Spiess, Kevin; Troy & Brandi Spiess, Coltin, Gavin; Frank & Pat Stahl; Lee & Dianna Stein; Julie Stevenson

Exodus 3:1-12 Then the LORD said, “I have observed the misery of my people... I have heard their cry.... Indeed, I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them.” (vv.7-8a NRSV)

It’s been almost nine months since I began serving a new congregation as Rector. In that time, I’ve had two parish secretaries quit. And the Assistant Parish Secretary can’t help now, due to the demands of her full-time job. We reached out to several churches in our deanery and diocese, asking if any of their members might be interested in the job. Three potential candidates turned it down because of “too long a commute.” Our church may be located in a rural area, but it’s at the intersection of two major thoroughfares and is quite accessible. So, it’s been too easy to feel sorry for myself and give in to despair. Yet, today’s Old Testament lesson reminds us that God knows our sufferings; He hears our cries; and He alone can deliver us from our troubles. Psalm 66:19 reminds us, “God has listened; he has given heed to the words of my prayer.” Thank You, Lord, for reminding me to trust You in this matter—whom else can we trust so completely?

Psalms 66, 67; Hebrews 12:18-29; Luke 10:17-24

Monday, May 14

Birthdays: Frank Stahl

Prayers for: Eric & Sylvia Stewart; Russell & Cheryl Strickland; Buddy & Diana Sullivan, Jeremy, Nicholas, Joshua, Olivia, Jacqueline

Joshua 1:1-9 I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go. (v.9)

God spoke these words to Joshua as the Israelites were about to enter and occupy a new land. Starting at a new parish in a different part of the country felt almost as daunting! It’s taken months for me to learn everyone’s names and stories, not to mention trying to come to terms with the cultural differences. That was particularly hard, since my husband—who’s our organist/choir director—is originally from this area. Finally, I decided to own that I’m an outsider, and educate the congregation about my different background, instead of trying to fit in. This may have been the hardest move of my life, but God reminds us in today’s Old Testament lesson that we can be strong and courageous, because He is with us wherever we go. In fact, as I look back, the Lord’s hand has been in every aspect of this long transition that began almost two years ago. Jesus reinforced this assurance in Matthew 28:20b, when he said, “And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” Thank You, Lord!

Psalm 89:1-18; Ephesians 3:1-13; Matthew 8:5-17

Tuesday, May 15

Birthdays: Mar Giah, Warren Settles

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

1 Samuel 16:1-13a But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the LORD does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.” (v.7)

Today marks the 25th anniversary of when I met the man I would marry, one year later. At that time, I was dating a tall, dark and handsome guy who wore hand-tailored suits, drove a Mercedes, and charmed women everywhere. Behind the façade, he was a scoundrel, and I knew it—I just didn’t want to admit it. Rick, on the other hand, was a medium-height cute guy, who wore jeans, drove a sensible Honda, and tended to be rather shy. But I was very attracted to him! One day, as I sat in my kitchen fretting over which man to choose, God spoke to my heart the same message He gave Samuel about David: “Don’t look at their appearances. Look on each man’s character, because I look on the heart.” When it came to character, there was no contest! And after 24 years of marriage, I couldn’t be happier or more blessed by God’s choice.

Psalms 97, 99, 100; Ephesians 3:14-21; Matthew 8:18-27

Wednesday, May 16

Birthdays: Brian Cahill

Prayers for: Linda Tervay; Lucy Tischler; Jim & Elaine Tummy, Jack; Jose & Brenda Valencia; Dick & Marlene Van Horne; Pete Varney

Ephesians 4:1-16 ...we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body’s growth in building itself up in love. (vv.15b-16)

Well, it would seem God has answered our prayers—at least temporarily—for some secretarial assistance. One of our choir members uttered in an offhand way, “If you need any help, let me know. I used to be the Parish Administrator at [a nearby church].” I kept turning Suzi’s words over in my mind, and then prayerfully wrote her a note with the job description enclosed. After opening it at rehearsal, she told my husband (the Choir Director), “I’m sorry I ever said anything!” But then it seemed everyone she knew—fellow choir members, her sisters, her boyfriend—all told her they thought she should serve as our Interim Parish Secretary. When I saw Suzi on Sunday, she said simply, “I’ll do it.” “You’ll do what?” I asked, clueless. “Be the Secretary until you can hire someone.” Wow! Her willingness will help to promote the growth of Christ’s Body in our parish, as we continue building ourselves up in love. And, I am still trusting God to send us good permanent help. Please!

Isaiah 4:2-6; Psalms 101, 109; Matthew 8:28-34

Thursday, May 17

Birthdays: Luz Longoria, Katie McKinley, Lauren Rodabaugh

Prayers for: George & Sandra Vick; Chris & Lisa Wanner, Matthew, Nicholas; Ray & Suzi Waters; David & Lettie Weaver; Mike & Anna Weil

Psalm 105:1-22 Seek the LORD and his strength, seek his presence continually! Remember the wonderful works that he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he uttered.... (vv.4-5)

“Seek” and “remember.” These two verbs were essential to the spiritual life of ancient Israel. Throughout the Old Testament, God’s people were continually exhorted to draw near to Him, and to remember all that He had done for them—most notably, their deliverance from bondage in Egypt through the Exodus. In our time, we, too, need to seek the Lord, and remember what He has done for us. Throughout this difficult late-life transition involving a major move with many attendant losses and taking on a new parish, I’ve found this truly is the best prescription for the ‘blues’ that often accompany great change: Draw closer to God in prayer, worship, and Bible study; and try listing all the wonderful things He’s been doing in your life, the many gifts He has provided, and the ways He has wisely guided. An old familiar hymn begins, “When upon life’s billows you are tempest-tossed, When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost, Count your many blessings, name them one by one, And it will surprise you what the Lord has done.” Indeed!

Zechariah 4:1-14; Ephesians 4:17-32; Matthew 9:1-8

Friday, May 18

Birthdays: Tommy Lamb, Carol McBee, Gabriel Oduola

Prayers for: David & Helen Weigand, Alaina, Cassie, Nathaniel, Charlie; Cathy Weisser; Kent & Tracey Weissling, Sean, Jeff; Erma Wetmore

Ephesians 5:1-20 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. (vv.1-2)

“Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.” This well-known saying is likely the most famous quotation by Charles Caleb Colton (1780-1832), an eccentric British cleric and writer. At the same time, the thought it expresses is found in today’s Epistle reading. The life-goal of every Christian is to become more and more like our Lord Jesus Christ, and one way we can do that is to try to “imitate” him. St. Paul hints that part of how we can imitate Christ is to “walk in love, as Christ loved us.” (Episcopalians will recognize this familiar offertory sentence that often precedes the Holy Eucharist.) Paul characterizes Christ-like love as sacrificial, meaning, “It’s not about me.” Easier said than done! Too often, I find that despite my best intentions, selfish motives crowd my well-meaning thoughts, particularly when I’m called on to do something I really don’t feel like. But then I ask myself, “Would I do this for Jesus?” The answer is “Yes,” and already I feel better. And many times, after having done my duty, I feel surprisingly blessed!

Jeremiah 31:27-34; Psalm 102; Matthew 9:9-17

Saturday, May 19

Birthdays: Christy Smith

Prayers for: Kaylyn White, Kaydence; Joe Boyd & Katie Williams; Matt Willoughby, Meghan, Clare; Danny & Debbie Winkler, Jennifer

Ezekiel 36:22-27 A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. (v.26)

I freely admit that before I became a “born again” Christian, I was not a very loving person. I did not like or trust other people easily, tended to be irritable and resentful, and had a bad temper. Then, in 1987, God got ahold of me in a powerful way, and totally transformed my life. Very quickly, I began to notice the change in little ways, such as coming into the office the next morning and feeling kind toward a co-worker who had previously annoyed me enormously. The biggest revelation came when, soon after my conversion, I went on a vacation to Florida and attended church with my mother. Previously, I had disliked both my Mom’s fellow church members and her social set. Yet, suddenly, I was passing the peace with genuine care, and chatting with her friends in a warm and lively way. I felt the love of God pouring out of me so hugely it was scary. God had truly given me a new heart and a new spirit! Thank you, Lord!

Psalms 107:33-43, 108; Ephesians 6:10-24; Matthew 9:18-26