

Good News Daily

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Sunday, February 17

Isaiah 62:6-12 *They will be called “The Holy People” and “The People Redeemed by the LORD”. And Jerusalem will be known as “The Desirable Place” and “The City No Longer Forsaken.”* (v.12 NLT)

As I’m writing this, we are in “March Madness” season. For those who don’t know, this is the month where the best teams in college basketball duke it out for the NCAA title. It’s a crazy, exciting time, but one thing everyone hopes for is an “underdog” team that beats the bigger schools. This so-called “Cinderella Team” is exhilarating to watch because they have been losing for so long that they are thrilled with their unexpected championship.

Isaiah foretold Christ’s birth, but he also didn’t sugar-coat the dark days that would proceed it. The Jewish people spent centuries on the losing side: conquered by Babylon, then Alexander, then Rome. But in the end, these “underdogs” would be “The People Redeemed by the Lord” and “No Longer Forsaken.” Out of all history, they would give birth to the Greatest Star Player of all Time—Jesus Christ. Now that is what I call a “Cinderella Team”!

Psalms 66, 67; 1 John 2:3-11; John 8:12-19

ANGLICAN CYCLE: Pray for the Church of the Province of Central Africa, The Most Revd Albert Chama - Archbishop of Central Africa & Bishop of Northern Zambia

DIOCESAN CYCLE: Church of the Redeemer, Cairo, The Rev. James K. Muriuki, Priest in Charge; Goweko Parish: The Rev. Tiyishime Amon, Tabora, Tanzania; The Mission of St. Matthew, San Juan de Lurigancho, Lima, Peru, The Rt. Rev. Jorge Águilar, and The Rev. Jerry Acosta;

Monday, February 18

1 Timothy 1:1-17 *This is a trustworthy saying, and everyone should accept it: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”—and I am the worst of them all.* (v.15)

Recently, I was in the library enjoying the lovely silence...until someone’s cell phone started ringing. Instantly, I began to look around—as did the people near me. Clearly, everyone thought this was a rude and even illegal thing, since cellphones were banned in this section of the library. But it got worse, because the inconsiderate ingrate *kept letting their phone ring.*

Finally, I'd had enough and decided to move. I reached down to collect my purse—and found out that it was *my* phone that was ringing. The rude, inconsiderate ingrate was *me!*

Though I had no idea I was doing anything wrong, I was the one at fault. Paul was the same way—he didn't even know he needed saving until Christ met him on the road to Damascus. Big or small, knowingly or unknowingly, we are all sinners who have been redeemed by the grace of our loving God. It's good to remember that—even if it takes an illegally ringing cellphone to remind me!

Isaiah 63:1-6; Psalm 89:1-18; Mark 11:1-11

ANGLICAN CYCLE: Maiwut Area (*South Sudan*), The Rt Revd Peter Gatbel Kunen Lual; The Arctic (*Canada*), The Rt Revd David Parsons, The Rt Revd Darren McCartney; Haiti (*The Episcopal Church*), The Rt Revd Jean Zache Duracin

DIOCESAN CYCLE: Wedding anniversary of The Rt. Rev. Donald M. and Ann Hultstrand, Greenville, SC.

Tuesday, February 19

Mark 11:12-26 *"I tell you, you can pray for anything, and if you believe that you've received it, it will be yours. But when you are praying, first forgive anyone you are holding a grudge against, so that your Father in heaven will forgive your sins, too."* (vv.24-25)

Several recent blogs feature people writing "letters to my younger self." If I were to write a letter to myself at twenty-something, I'd urge her to read further in Mark than Mark 11:24. While it is important to *pray and believe to receive*, it's just as important to *forgive anyone you are holding a grudge against*. They go together.

In my younger days, I elevated unforgiveness to an art form. I nurtured my grudges, thinking that it was weakness to forgive those who didn't deserve it. It took time and grace to realize that clinging to this unforgiveness could actually *block* my prayers. Unforgiveness ended up hurting me far more than it hurt them.

If I could tell my younger self anything, it would be to take verse 25 to heart. Let go of grudges, however well-founded. Forgive lavishly and often. Allowing God to forgive their sins allows Him to forgive mine. Because, truthfully, I really don't deserve forgiveness either.

Isaiah 63:7-14; Psalms 97, 99, 100; 1 Timothy 1:18—2:8

ANGLICAN CYCLE: Makamba (*Burundi*), The Most Revd Martin Blaise Nyaboho (*Primate*); The Episcopal Church in South Carolina, The Rt Revd Gladstone Adams, The Rt Revd Charles VonRosenberg

DIOCESAN CYCLE: Heavenly Father, set us free from every bond of prejudice and fear.

Wednesday, February 20

Mark 11:27—12:12 [*Jesus and the disciples*] arrived again in Jerusalem, and while Jesus was walking in the temple courts, the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders came to him. “By what authority are you doing these things” they asked. “And who gave you the authority to do this?” (vv.27-28 NIV)

Back in high school, one of my teachers was an old hippie. And I do mean *old*. The fellow creaked when he walked. But underneath the leather headband, faded bell-bottoms, and the sandals, the man had a lot of wisdom. I remember one time when he looked at our class and delivered the following warning: “You are going to meet a lot of idiots in your life. Don’t hand over your power to them.”

This passage from Mark’s gospel reminds me of that warning. The religious leaders tried to trap Jesus by asking a “gotcha” question. They didn’t care a fig about Jesus or his followers, they just wanted Christ to hand over his authority—his power—to them. It backfired, spectacularly, and they ended up looking like the idiots that they were.

We can’t always avoid life’s idiots. But we can avoid getting caught up in their games. Jesus knew who his authority came from; so did my old hippie teacher. Who knew the Holy Spirit’s wisdom might come by way of faded bell-bottoms?

Isaiah 63:15—64:9; Psalms 101, 109; 1 Timothy 3:1-16

ANGLICAN CYCLE: Makueni (*Kenya*), The Rt Revd Francis Mboya Matui; The Murray (*Australia*), The Rt Revd John Ford; The Reformed Episcopal Church of Spain (*Spain*), The Rt Revd Carlos López-Lozano

DIOCESAN CYCLE: Lord, set us free from the bondage of our sins.

Thursday, February 21

Mark 12:13-27 *When the [Pharisees] handed [the coin] to [Jesus], he asked, “Whose picture and title are stamped on it?” “Caesar’s”, they replied. “Well then,” Jesus said, “give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and give to God what belongs to God.”* (vv.16-17a NLT)

Even non-Christians have heard about this famous scene: how the Pharisees tried to trap Jesus by asking if he should pay taxes to Caesar. Jesus tells them to look at Caesar’s picture stamped on the coin. “Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar,” he replies. “And give to God what belongs to God.”

But imagine a “follow-up” question to the Pharisees: “And what,” Christ might ask, “belongs to God?” The Pharisees might dither around a bit before admitting they don’t know and, at that point, Jesus would beat them at their own game. “Whose image,” he would ask them, “is stamped on you?”

All human beings are made in the image of God. Just as the coin was stamped with the image of Caesar, we are stamped with the image of God. Black

or white, man or woman, Christian or non-Christian—we are all image-bearers of our Creator.

Isaiah 65:1-12; Psalm 105:1-22; 1 Timothy 4:1-16

ANGLICAN CYCLE: Makurdi (*Nigeria*), The Rt Revd Nathan Nyitar Inyom; Thika (*Kenya*), The Rt Revd Julius Njuguna Wanyoike

DIOCESAN CYCLE: Birthday of Sharon, wife of The Rev Dr. Arnold R Hoffman, Glen Carbon.

ST. MATTHEWS: Ron Gordon's birthday.

Friday, February 22

Psalm 102 *My enemies taunt me day after day. They mock and curse me.* (v.8)

Anyone who thinks the Bible is a “nice book” has never read Psalm 102. Think of your worst day, then square it, then multiply it by 100. That is the kind of horrible day the writer of this psalm is having.

Perhaps the most damning phrase is verse 8, where enemies “mock and curse” him. But the original language is even worse. It literally translates: “Those who ridicule me use my name as a curse.” In other words, the psalmist's lot in life is so miserable that his name is being used as a *swear word*!

But even in the midst of this disaster, the psalmist calls on God, knowing that the Lord has not forsaken His child. No matter how bad your day is (or how good, for that matter), our Father is always nearby, ready to rescue us from horrible days.

Isaiah 65:17-25; 1 Timothy 5:17-25; Mark 12:28-34

ANGLICAN CYCLE: Malabar (*South India*), The Rt Revd Royce Manoj Victor; Thoothukudi - Nazareth (*South India*), The Rt Revd Samuel Devasahayam Ebenezer Clement; Hanuato'o (*Melanesia*), The Rt Revd Alfred Karibongi

DIOCESAN CYCLE: Birthday of Michael, husband of The Rev Christine C Hopkins, Champaign.

ST. MATTHEWS: Lynn Gray's birthday.

Saturday, February 23

Mark 12:35-44 *Jesus replied, “The most important commandment is this: ‘Listen, O Israel! The Lord our God is the one and only Lord. And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.’”* (vv.29-30)

I'm using a quote from yesterday's verses in Mark. When Jesus spoke of the greatest commandment, he talked of loving the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. It is a prodigious list, but what stands out to me is how God led the list. All our *heart*. Not mind. Not strength. Not even soul. Our *heart*.

In the ancient world, the heart wasn't viewed as just another organ. It was the center of hidden emotional-intellectual-moral activity. It was the central organ that moved the rest of the body, and not just the physical body. The heart was the seat of a person's humanity. For early believers, this is where their love for God was to begin.

The Lord first spoke this greatest command through Moses (Deuteronomy 6:5). His Jewish audience would have recognized it. Today, when so much of our humanity seems driven by causes, hashtags, and internet memes, I think it is important to again recognize this greatest commandment.

Isaiah 66:1-6; Psalms 107:33-43, 108; 1 Timothy 6:6-21

ANGLICAN CYCLE: Malaita (*Melanesia*), The Rt Revd Samuel Sahu, The Revd Rickson George Maomaoru; Tirunelveli (*South India*), The Rt Revd Jayaraj Christdoss; Harare (*Central Africa*), The Rt Revd Chad Nicholas Gandiya
DIOCESAN CYCLE: Grant us, we pray, Almighty God that we may always believe in your only begotten son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

by Ruth Owen

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Pray for the sick and those in distress: Charlie, Jenna A., Mary, James T., Julie C., Bill B., Ms. Shayne, Diane B., Steve J., Carol D., Debbie T., Robin L., Margret L., Christopher L., Kim

Pray for the Faithful Departed: Barbara Allsup

Pray for those living in nursing homes and other shut-ins: Dale B., Barb W., Daniel T., and Margaret P.

Pray for: The Diocese of Tabora, Anglican Church of Tanzania, The Rt. Rev. Elias Chakupewa, the clergy and people. The Missionary Diocese of Peru, The Rt. Rev. Alejandro Mesco. Fr. Kari Marcelle, the clergy and people of Holy Trinity St. Vincent. Fr. Dave and all clergy, for whom we light the candle on the west side of the Altar