

Good News Daily

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Sunday, January 12

Ephesians 1:3-14 *And you were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit. (v.13 NIV)*

The Holy Spirit performs a number of functions with us; one is to be our divine connector with others for the strengthening of his kingdom. My husband is in the process of planting a new church in a rapidly growing part of our city. As we step out on this mission we are keenly aware that we cannot do this on our own, but must depend on God for direction. Each day we are in the habit of praying for “divine appointments.” We then trust the Spirit to direct us to the people that we need to talk to each day, people who need Christ in their life, people who need a church home, or people who, in whatever way is possible, can help us as we build our new church family.

There are days that we are in utter amazement with the connections that the Lord has orchestrated. Sometimes “out of the blue” we meet people who are looking for a church home. Even in the simplest conversations we have discovered people who are excited about mission and jump on board to help us out.

Look at the Bible; look at the history of the world. The Spirit uses ordinary people to do extraordinary things. Isn't it true, though, far too often we consider ourselves to be an exception to this truth—but we *can* do extraordinary things for God. He desires to use all of us regardless of our past and regardless of our own perceived weakness. As Christians, we are sealed with the Holy Spirit and He will guide us in all things.

Consider a powerful prayer to start your day: “Today, Lord, give to me divine appointments and let me be Your voice, Your hands, Your feet here in this corner of the world.” Then dare to wait and be sensitive to His guidance.

Genesis 1:1—2:3; Psalms 146, 147; John 1:29-34

Monday, January 13

Psalms 3 *But you are a shield around me, O LORD; you bestow glory on me and lift up my head. (v.3)*

David wrote this song of lament as he was fleeing his son, Absalom, who had turned on him. How discouraging and shameful to think your own son has become your enemy. This glorious and faithful king now is driven out of his own capitol city. How easy for him to hang his head low in despair and sorrow. To the

world around him, it was apparent that his glory was shattered. For a time, David, himself, may have felt the same.

David, however, did not let his son's defeat of Jerusalem become defeat in his own life. He turned to the Lord for help. He knew that the Lord is the only true defender of his life. No one could defeat him if the Lord was on his side. Every defeat is felt; every victory is won only if the Lord makes it so. David did not hang on to his own glory (Hebrew *Shekinah*: means weight or significance), but knew that true glory is from the Lord. It is that glory that he sought, the glory that comes from God and not from his own position and self-worth. "I lie down and sleep; O wake again because the Lord sustains me" (v.6). David knew that the Lord could renew him and lift his head once again with strength, power, and confidence.

How often do we find ourselves feeling low in the defeats of our lives? How often do we find our glory shattered? If only we might have David's strength of faith to turn to the Lord. May we come to realize that all true glory in us is from God. May we let Him lift up our heads and grant us His glory.

Genesis 2:4-25; Psalms 1, 2; Hebrews 1:1-14; John 1:1-18

Tuesday, January 14

Hebrews 2:1-10 *We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away.* (v.1)

We are destined to drift. As a child I remember being on a raft in the ocean. I was so wrapped up in my fun I didn't notice my raft was drifting away from shore. I still have an image of my father standing on the beach waving his hands and flagging me in. Finally, after a while, I noticed and I would drag my salty raft out of the water and walk down the beach to get safely back in front of him. I would jump back on my raft and soon I was drifting again—and soon my father would wave again. This was how the day went. Out and back in, out and back in. I must have tested his patience. Thank God he was watching me, for I often wasn't paying attention.

It is inevitable, as we live in this world, we will drift. The current of today's aimless culture will propel us out into the dangerous open waters. Like being on a raft in the sea, the drifting can be gradual and unsuspecting. Thank God our Heavenly Father is watching over us. He gave us the Scriptures, something like a lifeguard's ring and rope to hold in our hand, to guide us and keep us out of danger. If we hold on tightly to them, we will not drift from neglect and the distractions of our busy lives. Most of us have more than one Bible. Keep a Bible out in plain view—on the kitchen table, in your work bag, or in the car and close at hand. Read it often. Learn it well. Determine to shape your life by its truth. Even if it is only ten minutes a day, it will help us stay on course.

Genesis 3:1-24; Psalms 5, 6; John 1:19-28

Wednesday, January 15

Hebrews 2:11-18 *For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.* (v.17)

In the early church the harder thing for people to understand was not that Jesus was divine, but that he was human. Jewish people believed that God was distant and incapable of identifying with human feelings and intimacy. Remember under the Old Covenant, except in rare instances, God dealt with His people in more indirect ways. Greek and Roman cultures believed that gods were surely detached from mankind. Then Jesus, the Son of God, entered into this world—a living, breathing human being that looked just like us. The very thought of it was revolutionary to the early church. We have a God that has been here with us; a caring God who, having been one of us, can be intimate in our daily lives.

If you are presently in the midst of a struggle, remember that Jesus *gets us!* Because he lived in this world, clothed with human flesh, he understands the temptations and the predicaments of life. He identifies with childhood and adulthood. He understands grief and anxieties, our personalities, and all the emotions we strive with. God himself, through the person of Jesus Christ, has walked every road that you have walked—even the hardest road that was ever walked, the road to the Cross. Yes, Jesus even understands our fear of death. Our wonderful God sent a merciful and faithful high priest who “by his death free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death” (v.15). What more could we hope for than to have all our fears taken away and live a life in joyful service forever and ever?

God understands you. I hope that today you will ponder God’s wonderful and perfect plan.

Genesis 4:1-16, Psalm 119:1-24; John 1:35-42

Thursday, January 16

John 1:43-51 *Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” “Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?” Nathanael asked.* (v.45)

Nazareth was right on the Roman Road to Jerusalem. People knew about this beautiful, little town and it had a reputation. Remember how hostile the crowd was when Jesus first preached there? To be called a Nazarene meant that you were a part of a rude reputation.

“Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” I think we can all go a little deeper with Nathanael’s comment. Perhaps his flippant comment sprang from

deeper feelings. Perhaps he thought his brother Philip was being too dramatic. Perhaps Nathanael didn't really think the Messiah would come in his time. Possibly, deep inside, he did not think the long-awaited Messiah was going to come at all!

At times, I think there a little bit of Nathanael in me. Even when God is moving in my presence, it is hard for me to conceive it to be so. Questions of doubt arise. "Can Jesus really change me or really make a powerful difference in the world with my one, single life?" Maybe you can relate. We all have a tendency to think nothing of much good or importance can come from us.

Well, you and I know the rest of the story. God has a history of doing incredible things in and with the lives of ordinary people. We must look for God to work in unexpected places and in incredible ways in our life. Through His awesome grace, He delights to make powerfully good things come from us.

Genesis 4:17-26; Psalm 18:1-20; Hebrews 3:1-11

Friday, January 17

Psalm 17 *And I—in righteousness I will see your face; when I awake, I will be satisfied with seeing your likeness.* (v.15)

Soon another birthday will come around—again. Each year I tell my family the only thing I want is to spend time with them. But still, there will be whispering in the house and they will scurry around behind me trying to figure out that just-right gift to buy. Oh, as a mom, I do appreciate the attention and all the efforts at trying to please me. I love to see the whole birthday scene being played out but, as I have gotten older, "gifts" do not bring me the same satisfaction they did before. I am satisfied with just spending time together. I love to just sit at the dining room table and watch my children chuckle and laugh at old childhood stories or paint colorful pictures of their latest adventures.

Yet, as each birthday passes, nothing satisfies me more than spending time with God. If you have been satisfied in your soul—even once—you will understand and only long for more.

This is one of my favorite verses from the Psalms. King David tells about this deepest longing when he writes about the hope of being "satisfied" in heaven. We have many gifts and pleasures in this life, but none will completely satisfy us. What a day it will be when see God's face in righteousness! Then we will be perfectly satisfied. In that moment we will be like God—no, not in every way, but we will be absolutely holy and pure. We will be free from all sickness, all want, all temptations, and all hindrances that keep us from God. We will sit and soak in the mysteries and all the glories of heaven! Then we will understand the word "perfect." In the meantime, if we make time to sit in God's presence, we have a foretaste of that glorious time which is to come.

Genesis 6:1-8; Psalm 16; Hebrews 3:12-19; John 2:1-12

Saturday, January 18

Psalm 20 May the LORD answer you when you are in distress; may the name of the God of Jacob protect you. May he send you help from the sanctuary and grant you support from Zion. May he remember all your sacrifices and accept your burnt offerings. May he give you the desire of your heart and make all your plans succeed. (vv.1-4)

This psalm was written as a liturgy of prayer for a king before he went off to battle. As I was reading it, I was reminded of a sermon that has stayed with me for many years. In this message the priest spoke about success in walking the Christian life. He spoke about a “sanctuary” within us, a divine place where the Lord resides in our heart. His main point was this: the key to walking the Christian life is learning to *quickly* return to the sanctuary in times of battle, when we are in need; especially times we feel drawn away from the Lord. The key is quickness!

Many times have I come back to this thought of sanctuary. I don't think many of us like to look inside of ourselves very deeply for fear of the mess we will find there. Honestly, sometimes it doesn't look like much of a sanctuary. It's cluttered with disappointments, feelings of failure, and fear that we might not find God there. But, nonetheless, God has chosen to live in us. We are to be consecrated temples. We are living sanctuaries where the Lord abides. We constantly fight the battles of life daily, but the key is to come back quickly to our sanctuaries to seek Emmanuel, God with us. The longer we walk with Christ, the more we realize that he is the one that protects us, supports us, gives us the desires of our hearts, and makes all our plans succeed.

Genesis 6:9-22; Psalm 21; Hebrews 4:1-13; John 2:13-22

by Robin Jagoe

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Pray for the sick and those in distress: Margret L., Allan H., James G.

Pray for the Faithful Departed: Charlie C. and Steve W.

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