

## *Good News Daily*

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### **Sunday, December 27**

Hebrews 2:10-18 *Therefore he had to be made like his brethren every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make expiation for the sins of the people. (v.17 RSV)*

The writer of Hebrews is at pains to say that Jesus was not an angel or a purely divine being, but was fully human, as we are. In this, he is drawing attention to the fact that Jesus was tempted and suffered as we do (v.18) yet remained without sin.

Surely, this is a most important portion of Scripture, for it seems to establish the validity of Jesus “one, perfect, sufficient sacrifice” for us on the cross.

But it is also a deep word of comfort to those who are tempted or suffering. Because he has been where we are, he is full of compassion for us in the midst of our temptation and suffering. This is the heart of the empathy we all crave as we go through the valleys of life, whether of our own making, or from circumstances beyond our control. We have a friend in Jesus who has been there first and understands.

Lord Jesus, thank you for your understanding and compassion in the midst of my suffering.

Isaiah 62:6-7, 10-12; Psalms 93, 96; Matthew 1:18-25

### **Monday, December 28**

Psalms 124 *Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth. (v.8)*

The passages today talk about some very troubling times, especially the slaughter of the innocent children by Herod in retaliation for his being tricked by the wise men. What Herod did not know was that God had appeared in a dream to Joseph, telling him to escape with his young family to Egypt. God himself was Joseph’s helper.

Where is our comfort in times of extreme distress? Where do we turn in the terrifying face of innocent suffering? We are told to turn to the Lord, for He is the source of our help.

I have a spiritual director whose response to any personal dilemma I describe is, “Have you talked to the Lord about this?” Such an obvious and important question, yet I am often humbled to admit that I haven’t. I may have talked to my husband or a friend, but failed to address my concern directly to the Lord.

Lord, thank You that you want to help me. Remind me to talk to you today.

Jeremiah 31:15-17; Revelation 21:1-7; Matthew 2:13-18

### **Tuesday, December 29**

Revelation 1:1-18 *“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty. (v.8)*

All my life I have heard that Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end of all history. But what does this mean for me today? While I certainly believe it is true, is there any comfort to be gained today from this grand and lofty statement?

We knew a clergyman who was fond of saying, “Ah, but the Lord will have the last word.” He helped me to see that this truth can be comforting in the loose ends of life, the questions which will probably remain unanswered this side of heaven: Why did she have to die so young? Why did one crucial mistake in his life cause years of suffering? Why were they unable to have children? Why is there so much sin in the church?

Lord, thank You that you have understanding beyond my imagining, and You have limitless compassion, and that You will indeed have the last word.

Isaiah 12:1-6; Psalm 18:1-20; John 7:37-52

### **Wednesday, December 30**

John 7:53—8:11 *And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, “Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.” And once more he bent down... (vv.7-8a)*

They say that at least 80% of communication is non-verbal; that is, our “body language” often speaks louder than our words. Have you ever noticed what Jesus’ body language says in this famous encounter with the “woman caught in adultery”?

I was familiar with Jesus’ writing in the sand while the scribes and Pharisees try to trap him at the expense of this poor woman, but I had never noticed that he *stands up* to deliver—with full-on eye contact, and the impact of his erect posture—his famous words to the assembled accusers. He then stoops again to give them the freedom to slink away in acknowledgment of their guilt.

Yet he stands again to talk to the woman, evincing one-to-one compassion as he says, “Has no one condemned you? Neither do I.”

Thank you, Lord Jesus, that you did not fear your accusers, and that you stood tall on behalf of this woman and on behalf of us.

Isaiah 25:1-9; Psalms 20, 21; Revelation 1:9-20

### **Thursday, December 31**

2 Corinthians 5:16—6:2 *Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. (v.17)*

Here we are in the realm of the impossible. That is, the impossible from a human point of view, as Paul says in the previous verse. From God’s point of view, however, everything in our past is forgiven, even deleted from his memory, because of what Christ has done on our behalf. Everyone gets a new start in Christ. Nothing is impossible. This is the heart of the gospel, the Good News.

What does this mean for me, who is fully conscious of “things done and left undone”? For me, who would love a chance to start over in some parts of my life?

The answer is something like this: In those fleeting moments when I realize that the only thing that matters is how God sees me, I have a glimpse of that new creation.

Thank you, Lord, that Your Son died to set me free from the past in order to become the new creation You had in mind all along.

Isaiah 26:1-9; Psalms 46, 48; John 8:12-19

### **Friday, January 1**

Psalms 103 *For he knows our frame; he remembers we are but dust. (v.14)*

This psalm is one of the greats. I want it to be read at my funeral. Why? Because it outlines the gospel and describes the true nature of God: He is always merciful and gracious, He removes my transgressions as far as the east is from the west, and His expectations for me are realistic. He remembers I am but dust.

If only I could remember that “I am but dust.” My expectations for myself, especially myself as a Christian are very high. While that is not a bad thing, I need a solution when I fail to reach my own expectations, let alone God’s.

The solution? I can count on His mercy, His grace, and His forgiveness. No fingers crossed, no double message.

Thank You, Lord, that you are always merciful and gracious, even as I fall short of my goals for myself and Your desires for me.

Genesis 17:1-12a, 15-16; Colossians 2:6-12; John 16:23b-30

### **Saturday, January 2**

Hebrew 11:1-12 *Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. (v.1)*

This chapter is the classic description of what faith looked like in the heroes of the Old Testament. One after another, from Abel to Abraham to Sarah to Joseph to Moses to Rahab and others, the writer

recounts how these people acted on the promise of things to come rather than what they could see and touch in the present moment. The promises of God were *assured* because his nature is trustworthy.

My human reflex is, "Easier said than done." As with Peter, we are often called to trust God with situations which feel like being asked to walk on water. Not just difficult, but impossible. Yet, this is the heart of our relationship with God: we are called to trust Him by faith. We trust Him with what looks to us impossible. It is His nature to be faithful, and He cannot go against that.

Lord, give me faith to trust You with\_\_\_\_\_. Thank You that You are completely trustworthy.

Genesis 12:1-7; Psalm 34; John 6:35-42, 48-51

*by Mary Zahl*

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