

## *Good News Daily*

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### **Sunday, January 24**

Hebrews 10:19-31 *So now we must cling tightly to the hope that lives within us, knowing that God always keeps his promises!* (v.23 TPT)

By the time you read this, the whole COVID-19 scare will hopefully be safely in your rear-view mirror. However, right now, we're still in the thick of it, and it has brought many emotions to the surface—the worst of them being fear. People have been melting down right and left, and panic buying is the norm. Honestly, who thought it would be so difficult to find a hand sanitizer!

But even as I joke, I confess that I've lost my share of sleep over this. There are many unknowns, there is no vaccine, and people my age are dying from the disease. It's overwhelming. Yet it is in troubled times like these that I cling tightly to God's promises, just as the writer of Hebrew did. We are ruled by hope, not fear.

Though the virus scare is probably past, there are many things that cause us fear. But take heart! God *always* keeps His promises.

Isaiah 47:1-15; Psalms 63:1-11, 98; John 5:2-18

### **Monday, January 25**

Galatians 1:1-17 *You know what I was like when I followed the Jewish religion—how I violently persecuted God's church. I did my best to destroy it.... But even before I was born, God chose me and called me by his marvelous grace.* (vv.13, 15 NLT)

This COVID-19 crisis has presented many opportunities for me to be petty, selfish, and ungrateful. I'd like to point my finger at the virus but, truthfully, it's not to blame. I don't need an excuse to behave badly. It comes naturally.

It's easy for me to dwell on my sinfulness—but when I do, I remember Paul. His behavior before the road to Damascus was reprehensible. He was an enthusiastic persecutor and murderer of Christians. Yet God chose him before his birth to become arguably the greatest evangelist of all time. Paul could have dwelt on his past bad behavior, but he chose to look forward toward the Lord's plan for his life.

Like Paul, I have a choice: look backwards at my sins and failures or look forward towards the “marvelous grace” that Jesus chose me for. It's a daily struggle choose to act against my nature but, with God's help, I can join Paul in choosing wisely.

Isaiah 48:1-11; Psalms 41, 52; Mark 5:21-43

### **Tuesday, January 26**

Mark 6:1-13 *Jesus left that part of the country and returned with his disciples to Nazareth, his hometown. The next Sabbath he began teaching in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. They asked, “Where did he get all this wisdom and the power to perform such miracles?” Then they scoffed, “He's just a carpenter, the son of Mary and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas, and Simon. And his sisters live right here among us.” They were deeply offended and refused to believe in him.* (vv.1-3 NLT)

During college I was a bit of a birdbrain. I got good grades, but emotionally and relationally I was very selfish and immature. However, after I graduated, I grew up personally, professionally, and spiritually. By the time I attended my ten-year reunion, I had a great career working for a Fortune 100 company and had led several Bible studies. I was a different person, yet many people at that reunion continued to treat me as a birdbrain. No amount of evidence could convince them otherwise.

This passage reminds me of that reunion. Since his baptism, Christ had grown into his full purpose and power as the Son of God, yet many in his hometown continued to see him as the scruffy kid who grew up under their noses. No amount of evidence could convince them otherwise.

I couldn't change the opinions of my classmates any more than Jesus could. However, I could choose whether to believe them or not. Christ knew his identity was found in God. As a Christ follower, so is mine. Is yours?

Isaiah 48:12-21; Psalm 45; Galatians 1:18—2:10

### **Wednesday, January 27**

Galatians 2:11-21 *I have been crucified with Christ. My ego is no longer central. It is no longer important that I appear righteous before you or have your good opinion, and I am no longer driven to impress God. Christ lives in me. The life you see me living is not "mine," but it is lived by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I am not going to go back on that.* (v.20 MSG)

Ever since I was born (and possibly before) I've been a Chicago Cubs fan. I was born in Chicago, and though we moved to various cities, the "Cubbies" always had my undivided loyalty. I grew up following the box scores in my local paper. When I entered the working world, I had a little statue of a bear wearing baseball cap on my desk. But there's one thing about the Cubs that you might not know. During the last century, they never *won*. They hadn't won a World Series since 1907. Their nickname was the "Loveable Losers."

My poor Cubbies (and me by association) became the butt of many office jokes. But what they never understood is that my love for the Cubs wasn't based on others "good opinions." I loved the Cubs. Period.

So when I read this passage from Paul, I understood completely. It doesn't matter what others say, or how they make fun of me and ridicule my faith. My secular loyalty for my baseball team taught me that my ego isn't central. Because I love Jesus. Period.

Oh, and FYI, the Cubs did win the World Series in 2016. Never stop believing!

Isaiah 49:1-12; Psalm 119:49-72; Mark 6:13-29

### **Thursday, January 28**

Mark 6:30-46 *Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, Jesus gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. They all ate and were satisfied.* (vv.41-42 NIV)

Sometimes I imagine myself in Bible stories, like this one about the miracle of Jesus feeding the five thousand with five loaves and two fish. If I were in that crowd, I'm sure I would have been awed by Christ's miracle. I'm also sure that, being a self-sufficient planner, I would have brought my own box lunch to the gathering. I would have shouted, "Praise God" while munching on my own store-bought loaves and fishes (from my favorite restaurant—not some scrawny, locally caught scrod). I would have been worshipping God with my "whole heart," but not with my "whole belly." I was okay with that.

But that was before COVID-19. This virus isn't something I can prepare for. Like the masses gathered around Jesus, I have a need inside me that can't be fixed by my own power. It's a need for healing rather than hunger, but that doesn't matter. I can't do this on my own. I've no choice but to rely on God's mercy, whatever form that takes. And, because of this, I finally realized what all those people discovered on that long-ago hillside.

It's not about the fish.

Isaiah 49:13-23; Psalm 50; Galatians 3:1-14

### **Friday, January 29**

Psalm 40 *You are my helper and my savior. O my God, do not delay.* (v.17b NLT)

In the old but timelessly funny movie *Some Like it Hot*, downtrodden chorus girl Sugar Kane (brilliantly played by Marilyn Monroe) bemoans that she always seems to get "the fuzzy end of the lollipop." Though most of us don't have Sugar's problem of falling for low-life saxophone players (at least I hope not), I'm sure we can all relate to her lament. At one time or another, *all* of us have been stuck with the fuzzy end of the lollipop.

But no matter what trouble we are going through, we have a helper and a Savior, named Jesus. It doesn't matter if someone else caused our problem, or if we ourselves are to blame, the Lord is there to offer mercy, love, and forgiveness. Christ can make all things new—even fuzzy lollipops! Though it's generally a good idea to avoid low-life saxophone players.

Isaiah 50:1-11; Psalm 54; Galatians 3:15-22; Mark 6:47-56

### **Saturday, January 30**

Isaiah 51:1-8 “*The LORD will surely comfort Zion and will look with compassion on all her ruins.*” (v.3 NIV)

In the 1942 movie *Casablanca*, Rick Baine, who is caught in a hopeless love triangle, says, “The problems of three little people don't amount to a hill of beans in this crazy world.” Since the movie came out in the middle of World War II, it's understandable that the characters (and the audience), felt their own problems didn't matter much compared to that overwhelming war. Yet the unspoken truth behind Rick's words is that the problems of “three little people” *do* matter a great deal—to those three little people. Those problems also matter to God.

In the ancient world, a small kingdom called Israel was conquered by Assyria, who in turn fell to the global power Babylon. As one of many, many fallen nations, no one gave a “hill of beans” to the plight of the Jews. But God cared. As Isaiah records, the Lord “looked with compassion on all her ruins.” Though they were only unimportant slaves, God cared about the problems of the Israelites. And eventually He led Zion back to her home.

Sometimes our problems seem small compared to “more important” conflicts. But God always cares for your “ruins.” They are never insignificant to Him, and He will always lead you home.

Psalm 55; Galatians 3:23-29; Mark 7:1-23

*by Ruth Owen*

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