

Good News Daily

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Palm Sunday, March 28

1 Timothy 6:12-16 *I charge you to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach...* (v.14 RSV)

This is part of a letter written by Paul to Timothy, his young colleague (sometimes called his spiritual child), who was closely associated with him in the mission field. Since Timothy was now delegated to overseeing the organization of the congregations at Ephesus, Paul here exhorts him to be diligent in safeguarding the traditional apostolic faith, particularly against a specific type of heresy then prevalent: a strange mix of secret rituals, ascetic practices, and Jewish legalism.

We find here detailed and explicit instruction regarding the qualities and actions expected of a dedicated Christian. Paul directs his young colleague to follow impeccably in the footsteps of Christ to whom he pledged allegiance at his baptism.

Zechariah 9:9-12; Psalms 24, 29; Matthew 21:12-17

Monday, March 29

Philippians 3:1-14 *Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.* (v.8a)

In this message to the church at Philippi, Paul cautions against the danger of being taken in by the holier-than-thou Judaizers, those who insisted that Christianity alone is inadequate for salvation without the additional guarantee of observance of the Jewish law. To back up his argument, Paul points out that he himself had been the consummate Jew, by lineage and ritualistic orthodoxy, and yet has come to see all this as of no worth compared to the matchless joy of knowing Christ Jesus as Lord. His is unequivocal confidence that the only way to right relationship with God is through committing one's life wholly and totally to Christ.

Paul is quick to admit his own shortcomings but asserts his determination to vanquish them, to die to his old imperfect self, and go on to experience fully the new life in Christ.

Jeremiah 12:1-16; Psalm 51; John 12:9-19

Tuesday, March 30

John 12:20-26 *"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit."* (v.24)

Jesus here uses pastoral terms and images to instruct and prepare the inquiring Greeks regarding his approaching crucifixion and resurrection. What he was telling them—that a man should die in order to live again—was almost too incredible to accept, so he explains it in familiar imagery that they can understand.

Drawing a parallel between glorification and fulfillment of his mission on earth, Jesus likens glorification to harvest time, the fulfillment of the farmer's labor during the season. He further says that, like the seed that must be thrown into the ground to die in order that it might live and produce fruit, so he must go through death in order to be raised from the dead and live in a new life.

Jeremiah 15:10-21; Psalms 6, 12; Philippians 3:15-21

Wednesday, March 31

Philippians 4:1-13 *Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.* (v.6)

Paul's favorite theme, "Rejoice in the Lord always," sounds again, perhaps as an admonition to those who might doubt that joy can go hand-in-hand with trouble. To paraphrase Paul's salient advice, as true today as it was then: true prayer and anxious care cannot co-exist; the way to be anxious about nothing

is to be prayerful about everything. Then the reassuring words that, should we follow this course, we will possess the peace of God which passes all understanding—that greatest of all blessings!

Perhaps as a thought that suddenly came to mind, Paul makes reference to a disagreement or quarrel between two women in the congregation. We know nothing of the cause of the dispute, nor of the women themselves, but this mention of discord is a homey note that strikes a familiar chord.

Jeremiah 17:5-10, 14-17; Psalm 55; John 12:27-36

Maundy Thursday, April 1

1 Corinthians 10:14-17, 11:27-32 *The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?* (v.16)

There is no more important passage in the New Testament than this for it gives us the authorization for that sacred act of worship, the Eucharist, instituted by our Lord himself.

Someone once said, “We do not need to understand the chemistry of bread in order to digest it and to be nourished by it.” Yet, how very much more we will be nourished by the Bread of the Sacrament if we understand something of what Jesus meant when he spoke of the bread and wine as his body and blood. To the believer these cease to be just common items of everyday food but become a living contact with the Lord. As we consume the bread and wine thus, we become vividly aware of the meaning of the words, “that he may dwell in us and we in him.”

The sense of awe that I felt the first time I administered the chalice is repeated every time I hold in my hands the vessel containing Jesus’ most precious blood that was shed for me, sinner though I am.

Jeremiah 20:7-11; Psalm 102; John 17:1-26

Good Friday, April 2

1 Peter 1:10-20 *You know that you were ransomed...with the precious blood of Christ.* (v.18)

Privilege carries within itself a great innate responsibility to be used prudently and liberally for the welfare and benefit of fellow man. This is true in all walks of human society and is nowhere more evident than in the Christian life. To be chosen by God to be His child is an extraordinary gift for us but costly to God, for in choosing us, God paid the price of the precious blood of His Son.

At that price, our meager life takes on immeasurable value—and responsibility. I don’t believe, for instance, that God ever intended for us to hug to ourselves selfishly the wonderful unearned gifts that are ours only by His grace. For every talent, happiness, and material gift we have received, we have the obligation to use it wisely to the glory of God and for adding to the quality of life of those around us.

Genesis 22:1-14; Psalm 22; John 13:36-38

Holy Saturday, April 3

Hebrews 4:1-16 *For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.* (v.15)

Many times, when I have been confronted with an illness or a difficult ordeal of some kind, I have quickly turned to someone I know who has undergone the very same thing. There’s such comfort and solace in hearing someone say, “I know. I understand. I have had the same experience.” Even beyond the help of any suggestions or recommendations offered by the friend is the inestimable reassurance that my pain or anguish is understood by someone who has battled the same adversity.

How glorious to know that, whatever we are facing, Jesus understands for he himself underwent every pain, every suffering, every heartbreak that man has ever experienced! This is no far-off Lord, unable to share our human weaknesses, but one who walks the daily path with us.

Job 19:12-27a; Psalm 88

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