

## *Good News Daily*

Volume XXI

April 4-10, 2021

Number 14

### **Sunday, April 4**

John 1:1-18 *Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. (v.3 NIV)*

John 1:3 and the following sentences seem so easy to believe. We live in a cause and effect universe. How can something (a universe) come from nothing? It's a small step of faith to accept the mystery of a creative cause outside the universe.

Random creation, the other alternative, is too weak to explain our complex cosmos. One scientist calculated odds of randomness as an explanation at 1 in 10 to the power of  $10^{30}$ , a number beyond imagining. And how is it that we humans know that we know, i.e., are conscious beings and, for example, know right from wrong?

Some believe that eventually science will explain everything; that God is only a God of the gaps in our current knowledge. It takes great faith to believe that. As good as science is becoming at *forecasting* effects from causes, it still lacks the power to really *explain* events fully. If you ask, "What causes that (event)?" or "Why?" enough times, as a child often exasperatingly does, you will usually reach a point where it's impossible to explain except supernaturally.

Exodus 12:1-14; Psalms 148, 149, 150

### **Monday, April 5**

Jonah 2:1-9 *"But I, with shouts of grateful praise, will sacrifice to you. What I have vowed I will make good. I will say, 'Salvation comes from the LORD.'"* (v.9)

God orders Jonah to visit an important Assyrian city experiencing episodes of anarchy. Assyria had dominated Israel for decades. Jonah is to announce that Israel's God will overthrow Nineveh unless it repents. Jonah defects out of craven fear, sailing as far west as he can to hide from the Lord.

On the way, a storm threatens the boat and Jonah is sacrificed to save it. God sends a huge fish to rescue Jonah and discipline him. Intimidated by God, Jonah finally goes to Nineveh. The citizens, probably influenced by the political unrest and arcane tests to authenticate prophecy, repent and are saved. Jonah is furious with God for not slaughtering his hated enemies and leaves while pouting.

Jonah likely didn't mean anything he said in verse 9. He demonstrates no faith in God's protection, mercy, and love. He thinks he can hide successfully. He later does his duty out of servile fear and is angry with God for not slaughtering his enemies. He wants death. It's good discipline to ask myself if I would do much better given similar circumstances.

Psalms 93, 98; Acts 2:14, 22-32; John 14: 1-14

### **Tuesday, April 6**

Isaiah 30:18-21 *And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left. (v.21)*

This verse gives me hope and encouragement. It assures me that the Holy Spirit will guide me in the darkness of faith to union of love with our Lord. According to my spiritual advisors, however, I will always hear voices in my imagination that reason, command, or teach. They seem to come from someone else or from myself. I must be very careful to discern which is the voice of the Holy Spirit.

It is best to ignore most voices because they can be false, apparent but not real, defective, misunderstood, or will have had their desired effect instantly. They can lead to rationalizing almost anything I think or do. That said, if the words genuinely come from the Holy Spirit they should be clear, understandable, and engender love of God, humility, and reverence. Any resulting acts may or may not be arduous and/or repugnant, but certainly will be charitable and bring glory and honor to God. The voices should definitely be ignored if all they do is bring honor and glory to me or someone else instead of God.

**Wednesday, April 7**

John 15:1-11 *“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”* (v.5)

Jesus chooses a beautiful and apt metaphor to describe the relationship between his disciples and himself. The vine creates the branches as it grows and provides needed nutrients to each branch from its infinite store. Each branch has its own individuality, being distinct and separate from the other branches and from the vine itself. Yet the vine and its branches are one.

The greater and stronger the connection between vine and branch, the more nutrients the branch can receive and the more and better will be its yield. The yield itself brings beauty and goodness into the world, qualities that are absolute and timeless.

None of the branches in creation can live up to its potential on its own because of corruption. The good Vinedresser prunes the branch to remove the corruption and strengthen it through knowledge and humility gained by adversity. At the end of time, the single vine will have created a perfect vineyard to be presented to the Owner and Vinedresser. Lord, help me be a fruitful branch.

Micah 7:7-15; Psalms 97, 99; Acts 3:1-10

**Thursday, April 8**

John 15:12-27 *“When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me.”* (v.26)

Advocate is a legal term applied to the Holy Spirit. It’s as if we were in a courtroom to discover the truth about Christ. The courtroom is filled with people who doubt or disbelieve entirely.

The Advocate works through the institution of the church, through individual believers, and mysteriously through the direct, subjective, intuitive experience of believers and unbelievers alike. If I wish to help make Jesus known through the gospels, I can cooperate with the Holy Spirit in many ways. The first is through the church. I can participate to make sure the institution always strives to achieve its God given objectives and avoids corruption. The second is to proclaim the gospel to others through conversation, writing, or other works. The third is by always modeling Christ and looking for Christ in others. The fourth is by recognizing the mysterious ways the Spirit operates. This work involves prayer and being patient enough to stay out of the way of the Spirit working in ways not known to me.

Ezekiel 37:1-14; Psalms 146, 147; Acts 3:11-26

**Friday, April 9**

Acts 4:1-12 *“Jesus is ‘the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone.’”* (v.11)

In ancient times the cornerstone was the most solid and carefully constructed part of the building. It served as the measure to guide all aspects of construction. Get the cornerstone wrong and the entire structure will be faulty.

Since the Ascension the Holy Spirit has interpreted and passed down Jesus’ gospel through the church. The cornerstone metaphor suggests that getting Jesus’ message wrong will weaken or destroy his church. Heresies are the wrong messages and have existed since the beginning of the church. Gnostic dualism, for example, considers the body evil or unreal and the soul a prisoner in it. This belief persists today among many Christians. The Pharisees of Jesus’ day believed you were a sinner if you were poor and a favorite of God if you were rich. Critics today see a link between Phariseeism and the prosperity gospel.

It is essential that the church be clear and correct in its teaching and that I remain a humble and informed student. God, please guide me to the truth.

Daniel 12:1-4, 13; Psalm 136; John 16:1-15

**Saturday, April 10**

John 16:16-33 *"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."* (v.33)

Psychologists tell us that it is important to find a happy or safe place where we can retreat and recharge. It can be one or many places. It can be a real place like a cabin in the woods or a favorite room. It can also be a place in our memory or constructed in our imaginations.

For Christians who seek union with God, there may be happy places in prayer of all kinds including contemplation and the direct experience of mystical union with God. Seeking the Lord, however, is not without challenges. Union with God requires radical purification. Humility and detachment from inordinate worldly desires (addictions) for things and for spiritual goods such as power, prestige, and the like are necessary.

Overcoming these addictions, even with God's help, can be tiresome and psychologically painful. Being transformed by God is a long and arduous process. For extended periods prayers may seem fruitless, contemplation and mystical union impossible. One of my best and safest and happy places is in faith, faith that Jesus has overcome the world.

Isaiah 25:1-9; Psalm 145; Acts 4:13-31

*by Herbert Kierulff*

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