

## *Good News Daily*

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### **Sunday, August 8**

Romans 15:1-13 *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.* (v.13 NRSV)

Paul acknowledges that there are strong and weak believers in the church at Rome and he calls upon the strong to aid in building up the weak. Our church today can likely be described in a similar way. I have taken up both positions. Sometimes I feel strong in my faith, sometimes times I am weak.

Today, maybe more now than ever, we have a situation in which it is necessary to be steadfast and encouraged by Scripture to maintain our hope. I miss the familiar ways of worship and fellowship in this time of pandemic that formed a large part of my faith's strength. That has been taken away.

Now is the time for the strong to put up with the failings of the weak. Forgive each other as we have been forgiven by Christ's work.

2 Samuel 13:1-22; Psalms 66, 67; John 3:22-36

### **Monday, August 9**

Mark 9:42-50 *"Salt is good; but if salt has lost its saltiness, how can you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another."* (v.50)

This is the "stumbling block" passage. If something is a "block," cut it out and throw it away. Jesus is being *real* with his flock. Let me go down my block checklist. Hand: yes, check; Foot: yes, check; Eye: yes, check. All stumbling blocks, all checked. More failures than success.

But Jesus closes this passage with a promise and a call to live my life as he intended for me. A real discipleship, in spite of all my shortcomings and half-hearted endeavors, is possible. All I need to do is stay "salty." I know my faith is a gift. That gift provides me the power to recognize and consciously make the effort to avoid stumbling blocks and serve my neighbor in love.

2 Samuel 13:23-39; Psalm 89:1-18; Acts 20:17-38

### **Tuesday, August 10**

Mark 10:1-16 *Some Pharisees came, and to test him they asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?"* (v.2)

This is a tough lesson for anyone to teach or preach on. As soon as the word divorce is mentioned, the pain begins. I was a child of divorce. And this passage brings into view the hurt and brokenness that come, even when a divorce appears to be the best among all available options. Later in this passage, his disciples again ask about the matter. Jesus then describes post-divorce behavior as adultery.

I sometimes see myself as "a bride of Christ" waiting patiently for the groom to arrive at any hour. However, in that waiting period, I am prone to "divorce" myself from my true spouse. And so begins an attachment to another "husband." It may seem extreme to identify non-sexual attachments in one's life as adultery, but sin comes in all shapes and sizes. And anything that splits the relationship between myself and Christ is a danger to be avoided.

2 Samuel 14:1-20; Psalms 97, 99, 100; Acts 21:1-14

### **Wednesday, August 11**

Mark 10:17-31 *They were greatly astounded and said to one another, "Then who can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said, "For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible."* (vv.26-27)

All the commentaries I looked at for this passage in Mark agree. This lesson sucks. There is a great deal of theological accommodation (a management of the message) that takes place in the preaching

of this story. And it is a stark message. Jesus is leaving no wiggle room. Even the disciples are “greatly astounded.” And I can’t even begin to wrap my head around this as an “economic” plan for the world.

But Jesus tells the truth, all the time. And he acknowledges that, for a person like me, it is impossible. Look, I fail to understand this kingdom principle. Perhaps impoverishing oneself gives a different perspective. But I know that there are many people who are falling into poverty and not for the sake of Christ. And we as a church work hard to prevent that from taking place. I cannot keep myself sin-free, nor can I be the real disciple of Christ full-time.

Thank You, God, for my faith and trust in You that all things are possible.

2 Samuel 14:21-33; Psalms 101, 109; Acts 21:15-26

#### **Thursday, August 12**

Acts 21:27-36 *When Paul came to the steps, the violence of the mob was so great that he had to be carried by the soldiers. The crowd that followed kept shouting, “Away with him!”* (vv.35-36)

What a dramatic episode in Paul’s story. I can only imagine the courage it took for Paul to enter the temple that day. I think he had a pretty good idea of the lies which had been told about him and spread among the people of Jerusalem.

In my mind’s eye, I visualize the pandemonium that ensued. Riot is the appropriate description. With my real eyes, I see broadcast images of similarly upsetting violence taking place in American cities. No civility, or reason, or accommodation; just anger, emotion, and intolerance.

Two sides with the Romans in the middle. How about Antifa and the Proud Boys with the Police in the middle. What a crazy time, huh?

Holy Spirit, you were active and present then; please make your presence known to me in my collective and personal life today.

2 Samuel 15:1-18; Psalm 105:1-22; Mark 10:32-45

#### **Friday, August 13**

Acts 21:37—22:16 *“I asked, ‘What am I to do, Lord?’ The Lord said to me, ‘Get up and go to Damascus; there you will be told everything that has been assigned to you to do.’”* (v.10)

I have always liked the story of Paul’s conversion. It was overwhelming and complete in its effectiveness. One moment, he is the persecutor, and the next, he is the persecuted. What appealed to me was the certainty of Paul’s conversion, and the fact that Paul didn’t have to work this one out for himself. I think of the big, red “easy” button.

For me, I work on my faith all the time. I know it is a gift, but I can’t stop myself from behaving like I have to earn it. Like I need to do something good because each small failure puts me back to the starting block. And so it goes. Sin is inevitable. I cannot live the life which I imagine is the one God has set out for me. Instead, I live a life of starts and stops. It is exhausting really. Like Paul, I have been told everything that has been assigned to me, I find it in the Bible. But it takes real work to make things clear for myself.

2 Samuel 15:19-37; Psalm 102; Mark 10:46-52

#### **Saturday, August 14**

Psalm 107:33-43 *Let those who are wise give heed to these things, and consider the steadfast love of the LORD.* (v.43)

I am full of trust that the Lord has the best in mind for me. Regardless of my weakness, there is a promise of love and understanding. I cannot seem to find that in any other place in my life. Oh, there is a lot of love among my friends and family, but there is a limit to that. This psalm explains to me the abundance and totality of God’s objective for my life. He has given me a “spiritual roadmap” to follow. And that includes encouragement to continue along the way. It can be difficult. The way is not smooth and there are detours and off-ramps leading me astray. I wait and search for the signs that keep my spirit alive. And because I want to be wise, I give heed to these things.

2 Samuel 16:1-23; Psalm 108; Acts 22:17-29; Mark 11:1-11

*by Larry Standish*

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