

Good News Daily

Volume XXI

June 13-19, 2021

Number 24

Sunday, June 13

Matthew 18:1-14 *“Whoever humbles himself like this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me.”* (v.4 RSV)

How familiar these words are to all of us, but how complex. God calls us to be like children, but also to be so mature in our life in Him that we can be adults, receiving and bringing others to Jesus. And He also seems to say when we receive them, we also receive Him, again and again, into our own lives.

Children are humble because they are utterly dependent on their families for everything: home, food, clothing, education, decision making, answering questions, showing them the way, tying their shoes, teaching them how to speak, read, and sing, comforting them when they are ill, listening; the list is infinite. In the beginning they literally cannot put one foot in front of the other without their parents. It's very difficult for us to be as humble as a child, but if we look at that scenario again, with God as the parent and us as the child, we are in the right position.

In that security and joy of dependency on Him, we are strengthened to receive others to draw close to Jesus. And receive them we must, as we were once received.

2 Chronicles 32:1-23; Psalms 93, 96; Revelation 15:1-8

Monday, June 14

1 Samuel 1:1-20 *She was deeply distressed and prayed to the LORD, and wept bitterly.* (v.10)

Three of today's Scriptures illustrate how God draws us closer to Him because of our need to come to Him in prayer. Hannah and Elkanah's marriage had not been blessed with children, so she went to the temple in deep sorrow to pray. In their perplexity following the ascension of Jesus, the disciples went to their room and devoted themselves to prayer. The Israelites prayed fervently for God's face to shine upon them that they would be restored and saved.

In Hannah's situation I wonder if she would have had such a close relationship with God if she had not been barren. The Lord granted her five more children after Samuel, but would she have dedicated her firstborn, Samuel, without that time of barrenness?

And God needed Samuel! He had a great work for him to accomplish. How wonderful it is to know that God needs us, too. He needs us to pray and to ask, but most of all He wants us to have a relationship with Him and, sometimes, it seems only a special set of circumstances will bring us to (or back to) the feet of our Heavenly Father.

Psalms 80; Acts 1:1-14; Luke 20:9-19

Tuesday, June 15

1 Samuel 1:21—2:11 *“He will guard the feet of his faithful ones...”* (v.9)

How faithful Hannah was. She had prayed fervently for a son and had vowed to God if He would answer her prayer, she would set him apart for the Lord. I believe she must have been one of “his faithful ones” for a long time. God answered her prayer. In the midst of her joy she did not forget her vow, and as soon as the boy Samuel was weaned, she took him to the temple, the very place where she had prayed for him. She also did not forget to thank and praise God. Her story is an inspiration, an encouragement, and an example of walking with God in all things, at all times.

I love the similarity of this story and Mary's story—like a soft foreshadow. Elkanah and Hannah went up to Shiloh every year for the sacrifice; Joseph and Mary went up to Bethlehem. Hannah walked closely with God and went to Him in her need. Mary was God's handmaiden: “Be it unto me.” There is Hannah's prayer of praise and thanksgiving and Mary's song of exaltation. Hannah dedicated Samuel to God (as a Nazarite, a set apart one) and Mary dedicated Jesus (the Nazarene). It's thrilling to discover the linking together of the Old and New Testaments.

Psalm 78:1-39; Acts 1:15-26; Luke 20:19-26

Wednesday, June 16

Psalm 119:97-120 *Thou art my hiding-place and my shield; I hope in thy word...let me not be put to shame in my hope! Hold me up that I may be safe.* (vv.114-117)

There are times when I wrestle and struggle and am confused—and sometimes things become so difficult I want to run away, spiritually speaking. And like the psalmist (in Psalm 139) I say, “you hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me” and “where can I flee from your presence?” But when I have worked through my rebellion and His peace has returned, there is my Lord, my hiding place and my shield. He will hold me up that I may be safe. He was there all the time, and He always will be.

As we travel through our lives, in the midst of our many joys we encounter disappointments. Often, we experience inexplicable cruelty—but we do not have to run away. There He is, there is our Lord, our hiding place and shield, we can hope in His word and He will hold us up that we may be safe.

1 Samuel 2:12-26; Acts 2:1-21; Luke 20:27-40

Thursday, June 17

Luke 20:41—21:4 *He looked up and saw...* (v.1)

How comforting to know that Jesus “looked up and saw” when he walked in the world. He saw the widow give her last two coins; he saw the rich men give out of their abundance, but not sacrificially; he saw the scribes sauntering in their long robes, taking places of honor in the synagogue and at banquet tables, and stealing, however indirectly, from the humble.

If Jesus “looked up and saw” then, how much more he looks and sees now that he is exalted and sits at the right hand of God (Acts 2:33).

Most of us live where the widow lived, in the sense of our “position” in the church and society, the extent of our possessions and wealth. This is often used against us by those grasping for power and domination over us and consumed with selfish ambition. Thus, we experience their contempt, arrogance, and cruelty.

But we don't have to accept that. We can remember who we are in Christ and be glad. We will exalt his name together, we will seek the Lord and He will deliver us from all our fears; we will look to Him and be radiant, and never be ashamed. The Lord is near to the broken hearted and saves the crushed in spirit (Psalm 34).

1 Samuel 2:27-36; Psalms 34, 83; Acts 2:22-36

Friday, June 18

Acts 2:37-47 *And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people.* (vv.46-47a)

This Scripture reminds me, again and again, of the title of Francis Schaefer's book *How Should We Then Live?*

On a day to day basis we have fellowship with God in our quiet time and as we “check in with Him” throughout the day. This is the foundation of the way “we should then live” I believe. It allows the Lord to guide us as we live in loving relationship with our families (or close friends if we have no family) and go about our daily work.

Wrapped around all this is our coming together within the body of Christ, the church. We worship the Lord together, eat together from time to time, learn together in Bible studies and prayer groups, call on each other in the inevitable difficult times or seek God's wisdom through each other in times of decision, and are accountable to and for one other as we grow in His grace together.

1 Samuel 3:1-21; Psalm 88; Luke 21:5-19

Saturday, June 19

John 3:22-30 *“Therefore this joy of mine is now full. He must increase, but I must decrease.”* (vv.29b-30)

Whenever I read this Scripture I am always reminded of the times when we are privileged to introduce Christ to someone, or just say something that rekindles their faith in God. It would be so easy to “take credit” for it, brag about it, or indulge in just a hint of superiority that we did it. At the point the seed has been sown, I must withdraw and let God take over. Other than to encourage, our only task is to pray.

I recall a story I heard many years ago related by a Welsh pastor. He said he took his little boy to London and they went to Buckingham Palace and waited, and waited, to see Queen Elizabeth come out. Finally, she came out and he watched his little boy’s eyes fill with wonder and pleasure. But the father didn’t look at the Queen, his joy was in seeing his little boy seeing the Queen.

May our joy be in seeing our brother or sister seeing, and knowing, our Savior, Jesus.

1 Samuel 4:1b-11; Psalms 87, 90; Acts 4:32—5:11; Luke 21:20-28

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