

Good News Daily

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Sunday, November 29

2 Peter 3:1-10 *But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night.* (v.10a KJV)

Today's Scripture focuses on preparing for the meeting of our Maker. Recently, I found that nothing prepared me more for this than serious illness. Subsequent to my two angioplasties last year, my bout with medications at times seemed worse than the cardiovascular disease itself. I've learned if there's a side effect to any medication, I'll likely get it!

At least four times last year I honestly wondered if I would survive. Living alone, I even made a "selfie-video" for my family describing the whereabouts of paperwork they might need—in case.

The odd thing is that I soon discovered an unusual calm that came along with all that concern. Chronic dizziness, insomnia, gasping for breath, even chest pains I later learned were all potential side effects. Still, their endless onslaught created a yearning for relief that I imagined welcoming in "the inevitable." Now, a year later, I look back on that yearning, a yearning which yoked itself with my faith that now affords me, a slightly loosened tether to this world in line with today's reading.

Isaiah 1:1-9; Psalms 146, 147; Matthew 25:1-13

Monday, November 30

Luke 20:1-8 *And Jesus said to them, "Nor will I tell you by what authority I do these things."* (v.8 NAS)

I am a very impatient person. After 40 years in horticulture, I know how to design, plan, and implement gardens quickly. I have learned that can be good and bad. Saving people time is helpful and efficient. But haste can make waste as well. Recently, I took to building my own backyard water feature. Not being an expert, I impatiently relied on my "creative sense" rather than taking more time to consult with an experienced installer. The result was costly and unsuccessful.

In today's reading scribes rely on their self-assuredness in tricking out answers from Christ—and are denied. When I give in to the temptation of the pride of being a know-it-all, I rarely get what I'm after.

My water feature is now just what I'd hoped for. But I have to admit, it came only after taking the advice of a good friend who urged me to slow down, swallow my pride, and get outside help.

Isaiah 1:10-20; Psalms 1, 2, 3; 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

Tuesday, December 1

Isaiah 1:21-31 *How the faithful city has become a harlot, she who was full of justice!* (v.21a)

History is full of countries that have steered off course—for good or bad. The Old Testament’s Book of Kings is quite a tempest. A righteous king followed by a wicked king followed by a righteous king. Back and forth, endlessly. Similarly, 1940s Nazi Germany could hardly be compared to the civil Germany of today. The political “state” is always vulnerable to storm, which is perhaps why Christ told us to “give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God.” Even being a “chosen” nation does not guarantee citizens will stay the course.

Many argue contrite prayers behind closed doors open to the whispers of the Holy Spirit is our only true hope that His “will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

Psalms 5, 6; 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12; Luke 20:9-18

Wednesday, December 2

Isaiah 2:1-11 *Their land has also been filled with idols.* (v.8a)

As a kid I recall we had a pine tree in our backyard with a small alarm clock wedged in it. My father woke up late for work one day and hurled the clock out his window. I remember myself taking a McLane edger above my head once and tossing it to the ground when it wouldn’t start—like that was going fix it! I loved my dad, but he did have a little temper—which I share.

There are sixteen words in the Old Testament translated *idol(s)*. Most of them simply mean graven images. However, New Testament apostles later added coveting and passions to the definition—those “which draw the soul away from God,” say theologians Strong and McClintock.

I never thought of temper as an idol, per se. But, is it a passion that can “draw the soul away from God?” Oh, I think so. I am mesmerized when I discover someone immune to tempers. I find them rare and valuable, and always hoping they’ll grow contagious.

Psalms 119:1-24; 1 Thessalonians 2:13-20; Luke 20:19-26

Thursday, December 3

1 Thessalonians 3:1-13 *And may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all men....* (v.12)

My mother grew up in the port city of Kobe, Japan. Her parents were Turkish immigrants originally from Russia, traveling east through China finally to Japan. She was always surrounded by diversity. As a youth she spoke Tatarcha at home while at school she was taught English by French nuns and played with Japanese, German, and Italian children.

“My head used to spin sometimes with all the different languages,” she recalled. Her father, while a devout Muslim, learned to live among diversity as well in his business of trade with Japanese, Chinese, and other local immigrants.

Scholars tell us Thessalonica in Paul’s day was also a bustling port city—200,000 no less! Full of Greeks and pagan deities and ruled by Rome and its emperor-god. It also attracted scores of immigrants, being a city free of taxation. Paul’s poignant words that the flock there abound in love for one another ...and... for *all* men reminds me of the lesson of how my mother grew up maintaining her own identity while respecting the sea of cultures around her.

Isaiah 2:12-22; Psalm 18:1-20; Luke 20:27-40

Friday, December 4

Luke 20:41—21:4 *And He said, “Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all of them; for they out of their surplus put into the offering; but she out of her poverty put in all that she had to live on.”* (vv.3-4)

On a quiet September day, 82-year-old Maksura Akchurin was found dead on a sidewalk just blocks from her home in the San Francisco suburb of Burlingame, California. Maksura lived on a small stipend from her husband’s Social Security and her children’s support. Hers was a pleasant 1-bedroom duplex above a garage. She owned no car (never learned to drive), or boat, or real estate and died long before personal computers. She did have a telephone but spoke very little English.

Maksura was my grandmother. She would often ask me—well, point—to address envelopes to relatives in foreign countries. Since she now lived in America, relatives assumed she was wealthy and would ask her to send clothes, household goods, and even cars!

We later learned Maksura was on her way to give money to a neighbor on that fateful September day. Jesus said, when giving, to not let your right hand know what your left hand is doing. I’m not sure I learn that from today’s “prosperity gospel” but I certainly do from the example of my dear grandmother.

Isaiah 3:8-15; Psalms 16, 17; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

Saturday, December 5

Psalm 21 *Thou has given him his heart’s desire....* (v.2a)

As Christians we know God grants us the desires of our hearts but there’s often a catch. A bishop once taught that while tithe meant ten percent in the Old Testament, for Christians its 100 percent.

As far back as I can remember my heart has been in the garden. But at every turn in my life my heart’s desires were preceded with forfeiture. I first gave up my love of horticulture to major in Business in deference to my

parents. The Business major soon included studies in Horticulture followed by a landscaping business which my father fully endorsed.

After later completing further studies out of state and seeing no future I, again, relinquished aspirations and prepared to return home. Suddenly a Gardens Supervisor position opened on a private estate to which I remained some 35 years. Retirement was another forfeiture. Physically I was exhausted, emotionally I left kicking and screaming. But now, semi-retired, God granted me yet again the desire of my heart on another estate, part-time. It is a sober wonder to repeatedly find life after losing it.

Isaiah 4:2-6; Psalm 20; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Luke 21:5-19

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