

St. Francis in-the-Field Episcopal Church

Good News Daily

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Sunday, February 5

Mark 10:13-22 *I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.* (v.15 NIV)

Entrance into the kingdom of God is not gained through intellectual pursuit; you cannot “study” your way in. Entrance into the kingdom is not gained through a perfect attendance record at church, nor through a voluminous amount of volunteer service in the cause of Christianity. Entrance into the kingdom is not granted through adherence to the rules of a moral society. Jesus himself made it quite plain that the only way to enter is as a child.

Picture a child in the arms of his loving father and you will see love, trust, admiration, and faith in the one who holds him. The child knows that he is loved and will always be protected and nurtured. He trusts and believes everything his father tells him because he knows his father cannot tell a lie. Because he loves his father and is confident of the father’s love for him, the desire of his heart is to obey his father and do what is pleasing to him.

Come to the Father with no credentials other than love, trust, and faith.

Genesis 24:50-67; Psalms 93, 96; 2 Timothy 2:14-21

Monday, February 6

Hebrews 13:1-16 *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.* (v.8)

It is a comfort to have a friend that you always know you can count on because, for as long as you’ve known each other, that friend has been consistently kind, patient, loving, and faithful. There is a lot to be said for consistency. You don’t have to worry about that friend betraying you or giving up on you if you have made some huge blunder or mistake, because in your heart you know your friend will always love you, come what may.

It is a rare treasure to have such a friend, and if you think that there is no one like this in your life right now, then you have forgotten the best friend you could ever have: Jesus! He is never-changing in his love for us and his desire for our companionship. His character and characteristics have been the same since before the creation of the world. He stands with outstretched arms to welcome us back when we have wandered away as prodigal sons and daughters. His patience and forgiveness are inexhaustible.

Thank you, Lord Jesus, that we can always count on you.

Genesis 25:19-34; Psalm 80; John 7:37-52

Tuesday, February 7

Hebrews 13:17-25 *May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.* (vv.20-21)

These words are a beautiful concluding prayer in this epistle to the Hebrews, and I find these two verses to be extremely rich. There is an abundance of deep, spiritual truth about Jesus in these verses, as well as some practical application.

I invite you to be blessed—as I have been—by reading this prayer over again, slowly and thoughtfully. In place of the words “you” and “us,” substitute “me.”

Ponder the greatness of the Lord.

Wednesday, February 8

John 8:12-20 *When Jesus spoke again to the people he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."* (v.12)

There is a universal, common understanding of the difference between light and darkness. (The exception might be a person who has been blind from birth.) Even a newborn child seems to comprehend light and darkness on the purely physical level. But on a spiritual level these concepts become associated with good and evil, Jesus and the Devil. Jesus states here that he is the Light, and in the first chapter of John we are told that Jesus is the Word, and in him is life that is "the light of men" (vv.1-4). In today's psalm reading, verse 105 says, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."

What a wonderful promise we are given in all these references to Jesus as light, summed up in John 8:12, "Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." I walked, or should I say stumbled, through life in the darkness until my eyes were opened to the great truth that Jesus is the life-giving light for my path. Sometimes I stop focusing on the Light and wander into the darkness. I fall down but Jesus picks me up and sets me back on his path.

Thank you, Lord Jesus, for your life-giving light, your compassion, and your mercy.

Genesis 27:1-29; Psalm 119:97-120; Romans 12:1-8

Thursday, February 9

Romans 12:9-21 *Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.* (v.12)

When we read God's word and it gives us instructions that may seem like more than we are capable of following, it is helpful to remember that God never asks us to do anything that He cannot empower us to do. All we have to do is ask for the help of His Holy Spirit, and it is ours. Being able to comply with Paul's imperatives in this letter to the Romans is not something I can do on my own; I absolutely need the Lord's help.

If I start by being faithful in prayer, God will give me joy as I hope in him and the patience to endure whatever affliction comes my way. But, I must be "faithful" in prayer, and that means being diligent, persistent, and hopeful. As my faith grows, so does my confidence in God's Word.

The last verse of this passage tell us, "Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good." Again, this is only possible by the power of the Holy Spirit working in our hearts and minds, because our natural, sinful self wants to "hit back" or to get revenge. That choice, of course, simply leads to more problems. God's way is always best. I have lived long enough to see that. After all, love wins.

Genesis 27:30-45; Psalms 83, 146, 147; John 8:21-32

Friday, February 10

Romans 13:1-14 *Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another.* (v.8)

This verse gives us an insight as to how serious God is about wanting us to love each other. It is pictured as something we can never stop doing! If it is continuing and it is something we owe, then it is indeed a lifelong obligation. Other debts are expected to be paid up, but not this one. The first time I thought seriously about the meaning of this verse, I asked myself how love could be thought of as a debt. I did not have a satisfactory answer, but my NIV Life Application Bible gave a wonderful answer in the footnote to this verse that I will quote: "We are permanently in debt to Christ for the lavish love he has poured out on us. The only way we can even begin to repay this debt is by loving others in turn. Because Christ's love will always be infinitely greater than ours, we will always have the obligation to love our neighbors."

Love is what God cares most about, I think. "God is love" (1 John 4:8, 16). "No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us" (1 John 4:12). "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16). For more on love, take a few minutes and read the 13th chapter of 1 Corinthians. You will be blessed.

Saturday, February 11

Psalm 90 *Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.* (v.12)

When I was a young adult I never gave any thought to how long my life would be. Even when my father died at age 70, or when my mother died at age 78, I never really focused on my own lifespan. However, I did assume that because I was living a much healthier lifestyle than either of my parents had, I likely would live longer than either of them.

But I now believe that more important than the length of our life or even the healthiness of our lifestyle, is the quality of our spiritual life, which affects how we live in relationship to the Lord and to others. The psalmist's plea in this verse is for God to teach us to make the most of however many days we have on earth, teaching us to live in righteousness so that our hearts will become wise.

Oh Lord, please guide me to make right choices, and create in me a pure heart, one full of love and wisdom, kindness and gentleness. Whether I have one day or hundreds of days left on earth, please help me to live for You. Thank You, gracious Lord.

Genesis 29:1-20; Psalm 87; Romans 14:1-23; John 8:47-59

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