

Good News Daily

July 24-30, 2016

Sunday, July 24

Mark 2:23-28 *And he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. (v.27 NJB)*

When I was in my thirties, I was very concerned about keeping "the rules." I thought the spiritual life was all about having a "Rule of Life," and keeping to it perfectly. One day, the well-experienced and wise cleric, who was my spiritual guide, listened to me reciting my list of failures to keep the rules and my sad guilt about it. He looked at me with kind, caring eyes and said, "You know John, when you're drawing your last earthly breath, I don't think that you'll be thinking about how well you kept the rules. I think you'll be thinking about who and how you loved in this life." I heard his words, and felt like a liberating bomb had gone off in my mind and soul!

The "rule keepers" of Jesus' time crucified him, in large part because he wasn't keeping their rules. Jesus loved, and teaches *us* to love. Which path is truly life-giving?

Joshua 24:1-15; Psalms 24, 29; Acts 28:23-31

Birthdays: Antonet Carey, Christiane Devierno, Jason Douglas, Maya Howden, Kristen Tromans and Ashley Williams

Anniversaries: Idonna Browne

Monday, July 25

Matthew 27:24-31 *So he [Pilate] took some water, washed his hands in front of the crowd and said, "I am innocent of this man's blood. It is your concern. (v.24b)*

A dear friend of mine recently stormed out of our parish and denomination, over a decision by a national meeting of the denomination. I've known and cared about this man for thirty years. He's been angry about many things our denomination has done. I've worked hard to keep him part of our faith community. As I was riding the bus home from meeting with him, I said to myself, "Well, I did everything I could to keep him in the fold. It's not my fault."

After hearing myself washing my hands of the matter, I realized it was a lie. There was something I'd never done to help him. I never told him the truth about what I really thought and believed about his mounting anger. His anger was always witheringly brilliant and painful. I wanted to avoid it. Our parish could ill afford to lose his generous financial contribution. I placated and mollified his anger for years.

I've been washing my hands of him and his anger for a long time. I need to talk with him, telling him my truth. He is *my* concern!

Joshua 24:16-33; Psalms 56, 57, 58; Romans 16:1-16

Birthdays: Spencer Browne, Velda Daley-Tate and Amelie Laban

Anniversaries: None

Tuesday, July 26

Matthew 27:32-44 *Even the bandits who were crucified with him taunted him in the same way. (v.44b)*

A taunt is designed to anger, wound or provoke someone. Taunters are truly bullies.

I served as a combat Marine in Vietnam. About three years after my return, I was attending a luncheon for a group to which I belonged. I was walking by a small group of members, who were my age. As I passed by them, one of them said, "There goes the baby killer!" They all laughed in ridicule. I took about two more steps, then started to turn around. I was furious! I wanted to knock the remark and ridicule off of their smug faces! As I was turning around, a still small voice inside me said, "Don't! They won't stop, because what they did makes them feel powerful, dominant, and self-righteous. You'll get arrested, and they'll relish it, laughing about what an out of control fool you are. I've been through this, trust me to make the pain leave. I'll replace it with love." I stopped in my tracks, and immediately felt a warm peace enfold me.

The love of Christ is beyond any pain that anyone can inflict. Trust him!

Judges 2:1-5, 11-23; Psalms 61, 62; Romans 16:17-27

Birthdays: Nanette Mikes

Anniversaries: None

Wednesday, July 27

Matthew 27:45-54 *And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eli, eli, lama sabachthani?" that is "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (v.46)*

I have chronic PTSD from my wartime experiences in Vietnam. Although I've learned to deal with it, and have a good life, there are still dark moments when it overwhelms me.

Over the years, Jesus' sense of abandonment in his dying has been a great comfort to me in my darkness. I know that his experience was my experience. I can turn to Jesus, who has shared my pain, fear, and sorrow. He will help and support me.

All too often, we think about our Christian experience as always being about happiness, prosperity, and finding a parking spot. Actually, we learn more about the enduring love of God, and trust in God's promises, during the dark, helpless moments of our lives. The most potent words of Jesus are, "Don't be afraid! I'm with you."

If we share our darkness experiences, telling about our finding in them the love and consolation of the Risen Christ, others will be encouraged to follow Jesus too!

Judges 3:12-30; Psalm 72; Acts 1:1-14

Birthdays: Cheryl Hill and Justin Wright

Anniversaries: Paul & Carrol White

Thursday, July 28

Matthew 27:55-66 *So they went and made the sepulcher secure, putting seals on the stone and mounting a guard.* (v.66)

It seems to me we Christians expend a lot of energy keeping Jesus sealed inside us, because sharing our faith is "too personal."

In the age of Facebook, Twitter, and blogs, where people share absolutely everything in life with people they can't even see in three dimensions, why not share faith in Jesus Christ? There's actually a story about your journey in faith with Jesus. It's there inside the memory of your life experience, carried in your heart, soul, and mind. We do know how to tell stories about our lives. We do it all the time.

Here are two suggestions about how to unlock your story. First, think about your faith journey as a story. There are people, ups, downs, funny times, and sad times. (Doing this invites your memory to start contributing details.) Second, when you have your story ready to tell, share it with someone. Ask them to share theirs. Make it something to do at coffee hour.

Before long, you'll feel comfortable telling your Jesus Story. Then God can bring someone into your life, really needing to hear it!

Judges 4:4-23; Psalms 70, 71; Acts 1:15-26

Birthdays: Kyle Meunier and Amelia Valere

Anniversaries: William & Mary Devierno and Jermaine & Peta-Gaye McCarthy

Friday, July 29

Matthew 28:1-10 *But the the angel spoke; and he said to the women, "There is no reason for you to be afraid. I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said he would."* (v.5)

Last year, I gained a new friend, Fred. He had been a criminal (twice incarcerated), a voracious drug addict, and a combat veteran. Fred is the most profoundly converted and transformed Christian I've ever known. His life is a living testimony to Resurrection power.

Fred is a Free Church Evangelical, and I'm a High Church Episcopalian, a really unusual combination. He is a true brother in Christ, and a visionary about the Kingdom of God.

Fred died recently. We visited many times during his dying. We sang Gospel Hymns, he prophesied, we prayed long prayers, and shared much joy. A week before he died, as I was leaving, he held my hand, kissed it, and said, "My brother, don't be afraid. Truly, he is risen!" Then he smiled the most beatific smile I've ever seen.

I'll take Fred's witness and testimony as truth.
Alleluia!

Judges 5:1-18; Psalm 69; Acts 2:1-21

Birthdays: None

Anniversaries: Raymond, Sr. & Marsha Seow

Saturday, July 30

Matthew 28:11-20 *"And look, I am with you always, yes, to the end of time."* (v.20b)

These are anxious times in many parts of the Church. Membership dwindles. Financial resources dry up. Oh, what to do? Well, this isn't the first time in 2,000 years that these things have happened in the life of the Church. Yet, the Church has survived all of them victoriously!

What Christians rediscovered over and over again for two millennia is our Lord's true promise to be with us *to the end of time*. We don't have to face adversity and change alone. (In fact, we never could actually "fix" the Church all by ourselves.)

However, we do have to learn to trust that the Risen Christ is with us. We may not have the answers, but Christ does! Christian History has shown, over and over again, that Jesus is always with us. God will provide the power to renew the Church. The Holy Spirit will enlighten us and lead us down new pathways to being the Church.

Don't be afraid. Pray, seek the movement of the Holy Spirit around and within, and be faithful. The best is truly yet to come!

Judges 5:19-31; Psalms 75, 76; Acts 2:22-36

Birthdays: Keiva Greene and Sacha Hopper

Anniversaries: None

by John Ferguson

Used with permission from the BIBLE READING FELLOWSHIP
PO Box 380, Winter Park, FL 32790
www.biblereading.org