

Good News Daily

September 18-24, 2016

Sunday, September 18

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18 *"But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you."* (v.6 NRSV)

It is an hour before dawn. The house is cozy and silent. The lamp paints gold-rimmed shadows on my sitting room floor. I settle into my favorite chair, take several deep breaths, and begin resting in God's arms. I whisper a simple "sacred word": a symbol of my consent to God's love and action within. Slowly ... in the stillness, I begin a cascading movement of consent to an interior space that lies beyond thoughts, concepts, and emotions. As two lovers for whom words are interruptions, God and I hang out in Silence. When thoughts intrude, I don't resist them. I simply... softly... tenderly repeat my "sacred word," and release them. Oneness is. Time is not. The soft gong of my timer surprises me and God invites me to share that love with those whose paths I'll cross today. For the past eleven years, this praying in secret has been the fulcrum of my very ordinary life.

Esther 3:1—4:3; Psalms 93, 96; James 1:19-27

Birthdays: Christine Brown, Ann Bwomezi and Lesley Morris

Anniversaries: Damian & Andrea Facey and Curt & Edith Wild

Monday, September 19

Acts 18:1-11 *"Do not be afraid... for I am with you."* (vv.9a, 10a)

"Your MRI shows a spot in your lung." I catch my breath. Cold grips my heart. "Have you ever smoked?" "No!" "Are you sure?" "Yes!" "If you were a smoker, I would say the spot we see is probably lung cancer." My mouth tastes funny. Embarrassed, I notice the phone trembling in my hand. "I am going to recommend you have a PET scan to rule it out." As I hang up, I enter a land only those facing the real possibility of a long and painful death can know. Distracted and obsessed, I wait for the results. I listen to others make plans taking a future for granted I cannot. Occasionally, I am surprised by a sense of Presence... by calm and joy. Mostly, I am afraid. Now, I am about to get the results... the phone rings... "You don't have lung cancer!" I have a future again! My celebration is cut short when I remember my friend, Tom, who does.

Esther 4:4-17; Psalm 80; Luke 1:1-4, 3:1-14

Birthdays: Ronique Carey and Clara Tromans

Anniversaries: None

Tuesday, September 20

Psalm 78:1-39 *He remembered that they were but flesh, a wind that passes and does not come again.* (v.39b)

He sits in the airport shuttle across the aisle from me. He is about my age. Thick, grey hair and beard frame a handsome face. A monogrammed, fine leather briefcase lies tucked between his feet. The fine cut of his business suit, the power tie, the French cuff shirt and the Rolex nestled underneath the gold cufflinks pretend to tell me who he is. I wonder, what's the narrative that lies beneath all this? He wears a wedding ring. Is she his soul mate or a stranger he just happens to live with? What were his dreams: the broken ones and the ones fulfilled? What regrets still make him groan inwardly and bite his lower lip? Do little children crawl on his lap and safely fall asleep? When his life is threatened by death or fate, when his existence seems meaningless and empty, when he is guilty, full of self-rejection and condemned, when his life feels like a wind that passes and does not come again, where does he, and where do you and me, find the courage to be?

Esther 5:1-14; Acts 18:12-28; Luke 3:15-22

Birthdays: Gillian Amrett, John Rutherford II and Bianca Smith

Anniversaries: Robert & Cecile Torrence

Wednesday, September 21

Psalm 119:97-120 *How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!* (v.103)

Ten years ago, I began memorizing Scripture. What started out as mental calisthenics has turned out to be a banquet for my soul. When the Milky Way dwarfs me as it glitters across the onyx sky, my heart sings an ancient song. "When I look at your heavens the works of your fingers, ...and the stars... what is man?" When I am dry and thirsty from the boring daily grind, Isaiah calls, "Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters!" When I am anxious, Paul invites me, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!" When I am devastated, I pray with the psalmist, "How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?" When I am hopeless, weak, and powerless I remember, "I pray... that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable

greatness of his power for us who believe." I am healed.

Esther 6:1-14; Acts 19:1-10; Luke 4:1-13

Birthdays: Eugenio Carneiro, Peter Gannett, Cedric Tippenhauer and Karlene Williams

Anniversaries: None

Thursday, September 22

Psalm 146 *Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul!* (v.1)

Spring is marching up the mountain. I am following her track on the Appalachian Trail. I can see her red and pink footprints on rhododendrons everywhere. She has scattered her white and yellow and purple litter by the trail. Bees and flies buzz and dart around my head. A soft breeze brushes past my cheek. It then dances with the swaying grass below me before hastening to nowhere. Beyond the drop off, green mountains roll like massive ocean waves. They are kissed by the horizon dressed up for the occasion with the dawn's pink veil. The trail steepens. The mountain bites my thighs. The backpack groans. It digs into my shoulders and my lower back. As I climb over glacier-scarred boulders, my breathing becomes quicker, sharper, and deeper. The trail ascends through the bald into Grassy Ridge. The world opens up: I am standing on an upside down bowl. I can see at least four states from here. I pause and drink myself full of Silence. "A condition of complete simplicity." God is here.

Esther 7:1-10; Psalm 147; Acts 19:11-20; Luke 4:14-30

Birthdays: Emily Brown, Kobe Conway, Quinn Cuddihy, Sharon Harrison, Tariq King, Stephanie Lola and Amelia Riches

Anniversaries: None

Friday, September 23

Psalm 88 *O Lord, why do you cast me off? Why do you hide your face from me?* (v.14)

When my mother died in my arms of cancer, I learned "God being with me" does not mean God is going to "fix it" for me. But there is one level of despair that lies beyond that: when I feel abandoned by God. I do not feel punished. I feel ignored, forgotten. This is a hollow time in which I am a hollow man. My voice is dust in my mouth. My cry is meaningless. My head is filled with straw. Like Job, I am heard and disregarded. The psalmist does not indulge in rational explanation. At such times, theology is not much help to me either. It feels irrelevant. The psalmist's response is existential: a persistent, faithful utterance. In such dark nights of

my soul, the only way out for me is honesty and faithfulness. I acknowledge I am alone. I remain faithful regardless. In time, in Silence, resurrection happens.

Esther 8:1-8, 15-17; Acts 19:21-41; Luke 4:31-37

Birthdays: Ronald Burgess, Dimitri Douglas, Phyllis Fabara and Elliott Riches

Anniversaries: None

Saturday, September 24

Psalm 90 *Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, so that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.* (v.14)

Perplexed by the mystery of who I am, I long for happiness: to "rejoice and be glad all [my] days." I long to experience (in a relational, very personal way) an Ultimate Power around whom to find the courage to affirm my life. Affirm it in the face of my sense of powerlessness over my fate and death. Affirm it in the midst of empty, busy meaninglessness. Affirm it in spite of brokenness and guilt. However, I find that I inherently lack the capacity to bridge this alienation from the whole of reality, especially from the ultimate reality of God. Then, through what I can only describe as grace, I discover the ancient Christian contemplative tradition: a way of life that cultivates interior stillness and develops a welcoming attitude towards each and every circumstance. I begin to incorporate it into my daily life. Slowly, as I grow in the practice, I experience God's steadfast love "like a spring of water whose water never fails." I am reconciled, accepted, embraced: for me, in Christ, love wins.

Hosea 1:1—2:1, 13-17; Psalm 87; Acts 20:1-16; Luke 4:38-

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Birthdays: Marcia Bonnitto, Danielle Colley, Muriel Freund, Thomas McConnell and Rene Yacinthe Sr.

Anniversaries: Patricia Mantis

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