

Good News Daily

December 4-10, 2016

Sunday, December 4

Isaiah 5:1-7 *My beloved has a vineyard on a very fruitful hill. He dug it up and cleared out its stones, and planted it with the choicest vine. He built a tower in its midst, and also made a winepress in it; so He expected it to bring forth good grapes, but it brought forth wild grapes.* (vv.1b-2 NKJV)

God is a vineyard owner, and also a master gardener who puts real muscle into His work. I can feel His sadness and disappointment. Having done everything possible to produce a good crop of grapes, what more could He have done? Well, how about sending us a Savior to atone for all our stupidities and waywardness?

Fast forward, and wonder of wonders, that is exactly what He did! There was just no other way. Each year, when Advent rolls around, I have a sense of muted excitement. We are preparing the way of the Lord, allowing Him to uproot any wild grapes He may find, and standing on tiptoe to greet the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

Psalms 148, 149, 150; 2 Peter 3:11-18; Luke 7:28-35

Birthdays: Clement Findlay, James Jones and Alexander Lolo

Anniversaries: None

Monday, December 5

Psalms 25 *Show me Your ways, O LORD; teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation; on You I wait all the day.* (vv.4-5)

These words wash over my soul like clear, clean water from the fountain of life. They beckon me to a simpler way, a trusting way to live life. Some years ago my eldest son and his wife wrote a song together. The refrain goes like this: "Here we are, Lord—children at your feet, ready to do your will." There is a sense of surrender here, of the kind that transforms us into teachable and malleable people. We learn to wait on God all the day, because we never know when He will open a new door, or show us a pressing need, or lead us to pray for someone far away. Our times are in God's hands and He is leading us along His paths one day at a time.

Isaiah 5:8-12, 18-23; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11; Luke 21:20-28

Birthdays: Kayla Burke and Deanne Newton

Anniversaries: None

Tuesday, December 6

1 Thessalonians 5:12-28 *Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.* (vv.16-18)

That's it—in a nutshell! God wants all of us, all the time, full-stop. This leaves no room for dreary complaining or gritching about things, but opens up lots of time for thankful prayer and intercession. As the old refrain goes, "We've got to ac-cen-tu-ate the positive, eliminate the negative," etc. Those are good words for daily living, I have found. And though I may not give thanks precisely for everything that comes my way, I can in the midst of that remain a thankful person. In the midst of everything I can discover something thankworthy. As I focus on rejoicing and giving thanks, negativism recedes into the shadows and loses its grip on my soul. Praise God.

Isaiah 5:13-17, 24-25; Psalms 26, 28; Luke 21:29-38

Birthdays: Phillippe Yacinte

Anniversaries: None

Wednesday, December 7

Isaiah 6:1-13 *In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple.* (v.1)

Without a vision the people perish. Isaiah had one, and it was first of all humbling, later on empowering to his ministry. Visions though relatively rare are essential as God works out His will in human history. I have been blessed by two memorable visions in my life—both of them insights into God's purpose for His people in a particular place at a particular time. Both proved prophetic in that what was envisioned truly came about in real time. They prepared me for what lay ahead and gave me a fresh view of what was currently happening. So...I am a firm believer in the efficacy of visions. They are one of the tools in God's tool-box as He builds His kingdom here on earth.

Psalm 38; 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12; John 7:53—8:11

Birthdays: Alex Barcellos, Kayleen Bermudez, Ashley Husbands, Dexter Sampson and Marsh Seow

Anniversaries: None

Thursday, December 8

Psalms 37:1-18 *Trust in the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness. Delight yourself also in the LORD, and He shall give you the desires of your heart.* (vv.3-4)

These are rich verses which resonate deeply with me. Putting our trust in the Lord leads us into

good doing. Dwelling in the land—the place God provides to nourish His people—enables us to feed on His faithfulness. For me this can be a Sunday Eucharist with the prescribed readings from God's Word, or an informal gathering of Christians "breaking the bread of life" together—in other words, feeding one another with God's faithfulness.

In this way our cups are being filled and we find ourselves delighting in the Lord. Songs of praise burst forth from a grateful heart. When our will is so closely attuned to God's our desires will be also.

Isaiah 7:1-9; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12; Luke 22:1-13

Birthdays: Tashara Martin, Miguel Mendiola, Cierra Pettiford, Carmen Plummer, Juli Reid, Norma Shaw and Josette Thomas

Anniversaries: None

Friday, December 9

Luke 22:14-30 *He who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves. For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves.* (vv.26b-27)

Here surely is the priceless gem of Christian living. Jesus has turned the world upside down; he has flipped over the order of things. The ruler becomes the servant of all, not the overlord. As I pause and reflect on this tremendous truth, images come readily to mind: my parish priest helping clear tables after many a potluck dinner at the church; my next-door neighbors sensing my need following an illness, and—without a word uttered—taking my garbage to the street every week: no fanfare, just *doing* it.

We have only to ask the Lord to show us opportunities to serve someone's need. Recently I have had an opportunity to serve my granddaughter who is living with me as she launches her nursing career. Although I am sixty years older than she, I cannot stand on some pedestal of seniority and pontificate. Well, I *could*, but that would not nurture the bonds of friendship growing between us. A new opportunity for servanthood is opening up for me.

Isaiah 7:10-25; Psalm 31; 2 Thessalonians 2:13—3:5

Birthdays: Margaret Rogers

Anniversaries: Robert & Linda Sonderman

Saturday, December 10

2 Thessalonians 3:6-18 *But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good.* (vv.13)

When I was younger, activism was my *modus operandi*. Having six children had pretty well

conditioned me to get up and get going—just for survival! I was closely involved with music at our church. I participated in outreach ministries—the most memorable being a literacy program. I taught English to a Hispanic woman in her home several blocks from our church. Her needs were basic, like how to communicate with the check-out person at the supermarket. It was most gratifying to see her gain confidence in her second language.

And now? Communication tops the list of things I can still do now that my stamina is lower and my age higher! I write notes to friends in faraway places who need encouragement. The telephone is a great help also. E-mails? Not so much. My mother was a great role-model for me in this transition from an "on the go" life to a more reflective yet still fruitful one. Do you have good role models to light your path as you grow older?

Isaiah 8:1-15; Psalms 30, 32; Luke 22:31-38

Birthdays: Amber Herbert, Tanya McDonald and Andre Young

Anniversaries: Dwight & Dionne Douglas

by Betty Carr Pulkingham

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