

# Good News Daily

January 1-7, 2017

## Sunday, January 1

Psalm 103 *Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.* (v.2 NIV)

This is one of my favorite psalms, probably because it is so uplifting and encouraging. In the past, when I have felt as though my circumstances were conspiring to bring me down, I have turned to Psalm 103 and been reminded of all the ways the Lord has been gracious to me. In verses 1-5, David praises God for His forgiveness, His healing power, redemption, love and compassion, fulfillment of desires, and renewal. The psalm continues to explain the Lord's unbelievable love for us, and the fact that He is "slow to anger, abounding in love" (v.8).

Another characteristic of our Lord that gives me great hope is found in verse 12: "as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us." Wow! How reassuring to know that when we repent of our sin, not only does God forgive us, but He totally blots it out! Another way of saying the same thing is the He "remembers our sin no more" (Isaiah 43:25). What could be more freeing?

The next time you find yourself complaining about life, take a few minutes to read and meditate on this psalm. Let the words of David sink into your heart and you will see how incredibly the Lord has blessed you—then say, with David, "Praise the LORD, O my soul."

Genesis 17:1-12a, 15-16; Colossians 2:6-12; John 16:23b-30

**Birthdays:** None

**Anniversaries:** Ken & Hazel Chen

## Monday, January 2

John 6:35-42, 48-51 *Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never grow hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty."* (v.35)

Physical hunger and thirst can be satisfied with the proper amount of food and water, but if the sustenance isn't continued, the hunger and thirst return. In this passage, Jesus teaches us that if we feed on him, our spiritual hunger and thirst will disappear. There is no way spiritual thirst and hunger can be satiated by anything or anyone except the Lord Jesus Christ.

God created each of us with a longing for a better life, a desire to feel deep down in our souls that we are somehow completed or fulfilled, free and unburdened by the cares of the world. Many people spend their lives looking for ways to achieve this feeling, and though sometimes there seems to be a solution, ultimately they come up empty, finding out that what they thought was going to make them happy and content forever was just an elusive dream. Jesus compares himself to the manna that came down to feed the Israelites in the desert, yet they died, but he is "the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (v.51).

Thank you, Jesus, for feeding me; you are all I need.

Genesis 12:1-7; Psalm 34; Hebrews 11:1-12

**Birthdays:** Elizabeth Barcellos and Howard Bennett

**Anniversaries:** Daniel & Stephanie Ciocca, Andrew & Teri Cuddihy, Melvin Mawhinney & Alice-Marie Ford and Cedric & Anastacia Tippenhauz

## Tuesday, January 3

John 10:7-17 *"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me."* (v.14)

I don't know about you, but I am one sheep who needs, loves, and appreciates having a good shepherd. In this passage, Jesus explains what a good shepherd looks like, and also refers to himself as "the gate" through which we sheep find salvation and enter into eternal life, both here on earth and in the world to come.

Jesus goes on to explain that one of the key characteristics of a good shepherd is this willingness to lay down his life for the sheep because he loves them and will always protect them. A hired hand, however, is not so committed to the sheep and will run away and abandon them when he sees a wolf coming; "he cares nothing for the sheep" (v.13). Such is the case of false teachers and false prophets, both in the past and in today's world. Jesus also contrasts the good shepherd with thieves and robbers who come to "steal and kill and destroy," but the sheep (i.e., Jesus's followers) did not listen to them because they only obey and follow the shepherd who loves them and preserves their life.

Reflecting on Jesus as my good shepherd quite naturally reminds me of Psalm 23, one of the loveliest descriptions ever of the blessings the Lord showers on his sheep.

Thank you Jesus, for calling me to follow you.

Genesis 28:10-22; Psalm 68; Hebrews 11:13-22

**Birthdays:** Rose Carneiro, Liria Huber, Carolina Larrazabal, Deric Officer and Troy Spicer

**Anniversaries:** Alvin & Gloria Hanson

## Wednesday, January 4

John 14:6-14 *Jesus answered, "...Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father...The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work."* (vv.9-10)

I am so grateful to be living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in a country where I am free to worship unhindered in the church of my choice, and that I have access to God's Word, the Bible, where I can read the recorded words of both Jesus and God. Jesus lays it out clearly for his questioning followers: he and the Father are one. So, if anyone wants to know what God looks like, look at Jesus and all he did and said while living on the earth, and you'll see God.

To truly see and know Jesus and the Father requires more than just reading and studying the Bible. It requires faith, which gives us "spiritual eyes" so that transformation of our souls and lives may begin. Hebrews 11:1 says, "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." Hebrews 11:6 tells us, "And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him."

If we are struggling to believe and trust God and His Word, all we have to do is ask Him to help our unbelief, and if we believe He can, He will. I know this is true because He did it for me and He wants nothing more than to bring us closer to Himself. That's how much He loves us.

Exodus 3:1-12; Psalms 85, 87; Hebrews 11:23-31

**Birthdays:** Hazel Mitchell

**Anniversaries:** None

### **Thursday, January 5**

John 15:1-16 *"Remain in me and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me."* (v.4)

Because I love flowers and enjoy gardening, I have always latched onto verses in Scripture that reference flowers and all kinds of plants. God has such a lovely way of speaking to our hearts with illustrations that we can both understand and relate to. This passage in John speaks volumes to me about life both with and without the Lord.

Jesus tells us in verse 1 that he is the "true vine" and that his Father is the gardener; and just as I would do with plants in my garden, he cuts off the branches that are not bearing fruit (and might be dead or dying branches), and he prunes the healthy branches so that they become more fruitful (and grow stronger and fuller). Working in my garden, I marvel at how cutting away dead branches and pruning the healthy ones at the right time of year produces a fuller, stronger, healthier plant, whether it's a gardenia bush or a podocarpus hedge, a lemon tree or a jasmine vine.

When I am not keeping my eyes on Jesus, I am not the person he wants me to be: "apart from me you can do nothing (good)" (v.5). The way for me to "bear fruit" in this world is to abide in Jesus (remain in the vine). Help me, Lord, to be always vitally connected to you!

Joshua 1:1-9; Psalms 2, 110; Hebrews 11:32—12:2

**Birthdays:** Daniella Bonnitto, Ed Brillinger, Marilyn Forbes and Mikey Valere

**Anniversaries:** Mr. & Mrs. Michael Gavaghan

### **Friday, January 6**

Psalm 46 *God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea.* (vv.1-2)

I struggled with fear for many years. Even as a young adult I was afraid of the dark, and after I was married and had children, I was terrified to be alone at night if my husband was out of town. I tried all kinds of things to calm my nerves on those relatively sleepless nights, but nothing ever seemed to work, no matter how logically I tried to reason and think it through. Gradually over a period of years, as I became a born-again Christian and began growing in my faith and trust in the Lord, the fears began to subside.

What I came to know over many years of Bible study, through prayer and meditating on God's Word, is that I don't have any reason to be fearful! The verses above explain why. God *is* my refuge, my hiding place, the source of my strength, and He is always there to help me with whatever troubles me. He has promised that He will never abandon me, so what more could I need? He has demonstrated His love for you and me by sending His only Son to die for us, to redeem us and give us eternal life.

He is truly the God of the impossible, and that is why I know that no matter what happens in the world around me, I am safe with Him and have no reason to fear.

Isaiah 52:7-10; Psalm 97; Revelation 21:22-27; Matthew 12:14-21

**Birthdays:** Jesfye Barnett and Jeffrey Thompson

**Anniversaries:** William & Wanda Kitchens

### **Saturday, January 7**

John 2:1-11 *"Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink, but you have saved the best till now."* (v.10)

This passage tells the story of how Jesus performed the first of his miracles at a wedding feast that he and his disciples and his mother were attending at Cana in Galilee. When his mother saw that the wine had all been consumed by the guests and the feast wasn't yet over, she told Jesus—most likely because she knew her son would want to help solve this problem. Nothing would have been more embarrassing to the host than to run out of wine! Jesus' reply to her was a bit perplexing (see verse 4), but Mary went ahead and instructed the servants to "Do whatever he tells you."

Nearby there were six huge stone water jars, standing empty, and Jesus told the servants to fill them each with water. Afterwards, he told them to take some of the water (which now had become wine) to the banquet master to taste. The man was amazed and told the bridegroom he couldn't believe that he had saved the best wine for last!

What a happy story this is. That Jesus would perform his first miracle at a wedding, turning water into superb wine, preserving the host's reputation, being with people in a social situation, shows me that Jesus does indeed care about every detail of our lives.

Isaiah 52:3-6; Psalm 103; Revelation 2:1-7

**Birthdays:** None

**Anniversaries:** None

*by Anna Cash*

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