

Good News Daily

April 16-22, 2017

Sunday, April 16

John 1:1-18 *The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.* (v.5 NIV)

It is Easter Sunday, the pinnacle of our Christian faith, the essence of our beliefs. Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. He has overcome death. While today is Easter, I am actually writing this in June, about nine months ago. My personal world has been touched profoundly by death in the last few weeks. First, my father died, followed exactly seven weeks later by my mother's death. They both lived full, wonderful lives into their nineties, surrounded by a large, loving family. It's a sad time, a different time, but my heart and those of my family are full of gratitude and love for having been blessed with them such a long time.

Four days before Mom died, my Orlando community and the world were stunned by the senseless tragedy and mass shooting at a nightclub that took 49 innocent lives and injured more than 50 others. The pain and the wounds are deep. While talking with some of my fellow Orlando Health colleagues during a support group, the horror of that night was felt but, more importantly, the goodness, the love, the compassion, and the empathy that brought strangers face to face shone through. Truly, Christ was there and the Light continues to shine through the darkness. Darkness did not and never will overcome the light of Christ. Thanks be to God!

Exodus 12:1-14; Psalms 148, 149, 150

Birthdays: Prudence Belnavis, Bill Brown, Steve Forbes, Chris Graff and Timothy Shams

Anniversaries: Jim & Shirley Ross

Monday, April 17

John 14:1-14 *Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you.* (vv.1-2)

As I mentioned in the previous reading, both my parents have recently died. Their strong faith sustains me and our family. Neither voiced any fear of death, but rather gratitude for having been blessed so much during their lives with the love of family and friends. Fifteen years before Mom's death, she wrote the following in a little book I'd given her called *A Grandmother's Wisdom for Her Grandchildren*. The topic was "Death, a time to contemplate life..." and these are some of her thoughts: "Parting from those we love is the only sad aspect of death. For many it is a release from a sick body and pain—a crown after a life of hardship. It is an inevitable adventure and I'm 'dying' to know what the next world is like...I trust God to make it all okay...I'm surely not worried about it...This world is a land of the dying—the

next is the land of the living—and if it's eternal, let's hope it's interesting. It better be good!!" My mother's joyful spirit, strong faith, and her own words of wisdom continue to bring me comfort. May they bless you as well.

Jonah 2:1-9; Psalms 93, 98; Acts 2:14, 22-32

Birthdays: Cheryl Burley, Michelle Cathcart and Evelyn Lee

Anniversaries: Anna Hayle & Emmett Richards-Waite

Tuesday, April 18

John 14:15-31 *"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."* (v.27)

The first verse of chapter 14 in John's gospel says, "Do not let your hearts be troubled" and those same words are repeated in the 27th verse. That's a good reminder that these are powerful words Jesus wants us to hear and inwardly digest. "Do not let your hearts be troubled"—so much easier said than done, but what peace comes when we let go of fear, doubt, anxiety and look to Jesus for comfort. One of our priests, Fr. Russell, reminds us we are "Kingdom people" who have received the message of hope and freedom from despair. We are to bring God into every situation. He promises to be with us always and will never abandon us. He is with us to the end. What good news! That is the peace that only comes from God and truly is beyond human understanding.

Isaiah 30:18-21; Psalm 103; Acts 2:26-47

Birthdays: Joanne Michael-Dussuau and Norma Roberts

Anniversaries: None

Wednesday, April 19

John 15:1-11 *"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful."* (vv.1-2)

Pruning can be done gently or drastically, but it must be done to optimize the health and future growth of your trees and plants. Just as our yards need pruning, so do our lives. We learn lessons on this journey called life, and some of the most important ones stem from the difficult chapters—illness, divorce, death of loved ones, job loss. How we manage these "prunings" can bring restoration and life lessons that will serve us well. Change is inevitable but God's love is forever. Hold on to His promise and unwavering love during the difficult passages of life.

Micah 7:7-15; Psalms 97, 99; Acts 3:1-10

Birthdays: Dizonne Nembhard and Lynette Nembhard

Anniversaries: William & Niamh Saunders

Thursday, April 20

Psalm 147 *He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. He determines the number of the stars and calls them each by name. Great is our Lord and mighty in power; his understanding has no limit.* (vv.3-5)

I am a prime example of God's mercy and healing. Years ago I was brokenhearted as my long marriage ended. I felt defeated, hopeless, afraid, and full of self-doubt. Despite knowing God loved me without condition, I don't think I loved myself. Failure became the way I defined myself.

Over the years God healed my broken heart. He did not "cure" my marriage but He certainly healed broken relationships and restored my sense of self-worth and purpose. Through the love of family, friends, my faith community, the healing ministry, and counseling, I became a new creation in Christ. The God who created the universe and yet knows each of us personally and individually, took me into His loving arms and bound up my wounds. It didn't happen overnight. I learned that He wastes nothing and uses all the broken pieces to bring restoration and new beauty to a broken soul. For that I am eternally grateful.

Ezekiel 37:1-14; Psalm 146; Acts 3:11-26; John 15:12-27

Birthdays: Jonathan Burley

Anniversaries: Charlton & Grace Wallace

Friday, April 21

Psalm 136 *Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good. His love endures forever.* (v.1)

I received one of my fundamental life lessons through the words of the late John Claypool in his book *The Tracks of a Fellow Struggler*. As a minister who was dealing with the death of his young daughter from leukemia, he struggled to find meaning in his grief. Ultimately through his faith and the Scriptures, he concluded that "Life is gift." That he had had his precious daughter at all was an undeserved gift from God. That changed his life and it also changed mine, helping me embrace gratitude and being thankful for all of life, its blessings and its trials.

Gratitude overshadows sorrow. It is a decision, a choice, and in Philippians 4:6 we're told to "Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God."

During a recent visit to see my grandchildren, my sweet little six-year-old Charlotte said grace. She began by giving thanks for our food and then gave thanks for our family, the trees, the flowers, and the birds, and then she asked God to be with her great Granny and Granddaddy and their dog, Cruiser, all now in heaven. I was so touched by her awareness of God's gifts and blessings. She is learning to give thanks at an early age, a gift of great benefit that will help her build a solid foundation for life's journey. Thank You, Lord, for my many blessings.

Daniel 12:1-4, 13; Acts 4:1-12; John 16:1-15

Birthdays: Patrick Graham, Tyrese Harris, Steve Moody, Migeul Salgado and Bianca Yacinthe

Anniversaries: None

Saturday, April 22

John 16:16-33 *"A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world. So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy."* (vv.21-22)

I so remember the day I became a mother. As Jesus said, it was a day of new and unbelievable physical pain replaced in an instant with pure joy as Merrill was born. All the prenatal and Lamaze classes could not prepare me for the depth and dichotomy of emotions that were experienced that day. It still seems so vivid. So, too, grieving the loss of my parents in such a short time has been difficult, but knowing they are together with Jesus brings me great peace, real comfort, and deep joy. We can trust Jesus' words that He has overcome the darkness, conquered death, and replaced our sadness with hope and joy. I am so thankful.

Isaiah 25:1-9; Psalm 145; Acts 4:13-31

Birthdays: Marcus Norman, Portia Scott, Alicia Sibblis, Grace Wallace and Nella Wallace

Anniversaries: None

by Suzanne McKee

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