

Birthdays: Cheryl Bradford, Geraldine Farley, Vinette Thomas and Mark Tromans

Anniversaries: None

Thursday, January 19

Mark 4:21-34 *"It is like a mustard seed which, when it is sown on the ground, is smaller than all the seeds on earth; but when it is sown, it grows up and becomes greater than all herbs, and shoots out large branches, so that the birds of the air may nest under its shade."* (vv.31-32)

Anyone can purchase a small necklace or other items with a barely visible seed inside. The Parable of the Mustard Seed comes with it. Tucked away in the pocket of the cover of one of my Bibles I found a plastic bag containing a tiny mustard seed. I remember placing it there as a reminder of the beginning of my quest for more of the Holy Spirit. On the first day of the Women's Retreat we were each given the gift as a reminder of our new faith journey.

In Jesus' parable of the mustard seed, He uses it as a symbol of how the kingdom of God is growing. I love growing plants and flowers and I'm sometimes tempted to plant the seed. I've read they can grow to a height of ten to twelve feet. How impressive it would be. However, I return the seed to the safety of my Bible where it will continue as a reminder of my humble beginning as I grow and await the return of Jesus and his reaping of the fields.

Isaiah 45:5-17; Palm 37:1-18; Ephesians 5:15-33

Birthdays: Eric Franco-Velez

Anniversaries: None

Friday, January 20

Mark 4:35-41 *But He said to them, "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?" And they feared exceedingly and said to one another, "Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!"* (vv.40-41)

The wind whispers through the oak trees and grows to a roar. Leaves race to the ground. Acorns roll across the roof in a hurry to get to the other side. Branches swing back and forth. Now silence. The cycle begins once more, increasing to a rumble. Then all is quiet. Now the wind softly sways the branches and I wonder where the birds and squirrels go when the wind blows the branches holding their nests. The windstorm rises above the sea and stirs up great waves. Only the whitecaps are visible in the black night and I wonder if the sea creatures escape to the depth of the ocean floor.

In Genesis 1:20, it tells how God created birds to fly above the earth and every living thing which abounds in the waters. Doesn't it stand to reason the God of all creation will protect what He created?

As we face the storms of our lives we should feel no fear. We can take comfort in the knowledge the Great Creator of all things is in control.

Isaiah 45:18-25; Psalm 31; Ephesians 6:1-9

Birthdays: Joseph Adlam, Hannah Bwomezi, Ryan Cassarino, Janelle Doharty, Audrey Guy, Andrea Jones, Stephen Kemp, Terri-Ann King, Kelsey Mulvaney, Nicole Plummer and Tracey Richardson

Anniversaries: Oswald & Alison Hixon and Bernard & Norma Shaw

Saturday, January 21

Ephesians 6:10-24 *...and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.* (vv.19-20)

I'm an avid reader and I love a good mystery. I read Nancy Drew mystery stories as a young girl; *The Secret in the Old Attic* among my favorites. As a teenager the laziness of long hot summers drew me to the hammock with a book. Even though my *bucket list* includes a Mystery Dinner Theater and Mystery Theater Train, a book still draws me.

Mysteries in the greatest book of all time, the Bible, fill my thoughts. The many mysteries in the Old Testament, commencing with "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1), the burning bush, and the parting of the Red Sea, are difficult to count. The New Testament, from Mary's virgin birth through Jesus' ascension, is filled with mystery.

Apostle Paul references *mysterries* throughout his letters in the New Testament. Even Jesus tells his disciples they will "know the mystery of the kingdom of God" (Mark 4:11). The dictionary defines mystery as a religious truth no one can know except by revelation and cannot fully understand.

Love a mystery? Open the Bible.

Isaiah 46:1-13; Psalms 30, 32; Mark 5:1-20

Birthdays: Karen Froniewski, Kathleen Konior, Tyler Plummer, Elizabeth Sallee and Anthony Trotman

Anniversaries: None

by Shirley J. Conley

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