

# *Good News Daily*

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## **Sunday, March 11**

Romans 8:11-25 *For what you have received was not the spirit of slavery to bring you back into fear; you received the Spirit of adoption, enabling us to cry out, "Abba, Father!"* (v.15 NJB)

I keep having encounters with people who are absolutely convinced that God is waiting to punish them for something they've done in the past, or some negative aspect of themselves they can't change.

I need to be honest that I've spent many years of my life with the same fear. One day, when the struggle with that fear was particularly intense, this verse leapt off the page of my Bible, making me weep.

Over the intervening years, I've pondered Paul's words many times. I know that the Darkness always wants us to believe something about God that's simply not true. In this case the lie is that God is angry and waiting to punish us, so we should be afraid of God.

The truth is that in and through Jesus Christ, God has adopted us as beloved daughters and sons. So deep is God's love for us that we can cry out "*Daddy!*" (an English translation of *Abba*) whenever we are lost, hurt, or afraid. God will come to us in love, concern, and healing!

Genesis 48:8-22; Psalms 66, 67; John 6:27-40

## **Monday, March 12**

1 Corinthians 10:14—11:1 *The blessing-cup, which we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ; and the loaf of bread which we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ?* (v.16)

Last Sunday, in the midst of Holy Communion, I realized I was paying more attention to the beautiful music, flowers, robes, architecture, and crying children than I was to what was actually happening at the altar.

Fortunately, I have a memory that quickly draws me back to the mystery of sharing Christ's Body and Blood. It's a memory of being a Marine, near the DMZ in Vietnam. A priest had come to bring us communion. Just as he arrived, we were attacked with rockets. All of us dove and scrambled into a bunker. With explosions and the whine of shrapnel overhead, we received Communion. I've never been more aware that Christ was really present with us, sharing the fullness of Resurrection life.

I'm grateful for that memory, because it helps me to refocus my attention on the "main thing" during worship. If you find yourself needing to refocus during worship, please feel free to use this little prayer, "Lord, help me to not be distracted by the staging, but focus on the Mystery." It works!

## **Tuesday, March 13**

Mark 8:1-10 *They ate as much as they wanted, and they collected seven basketfuls of the scraps left over.* (v.8)

I've served on several governing boards of congregations. Most of the meeting time was spent talking about resources: money, volunteers, facilities, etc.

In this passage of Scripture, the disciples exhibit a response that is all too common when congregational boards talk about resources. It's a scarcity response, "There isn't enough. Whatever can we do?" Unfortunately, what often follows this scarcity response are suggestions based on secular business practices.

What would happen if a board's first response was prayer? "Lord please help us!" (The board members could pray about the matter daily until their next meeting.)

What happened to the disciples was that their scarcity response blinded them to the first miracle of the loaves they had witnessed just a few days earlier!

I wonder what would happen if our first response to congregational resource questions was faithful, intense prayer. Our loving, abundant, awesome God might just show us the way to receive what we need, with something left over!

Genesis 49:29—50:14; Psalms 97, 99, 100; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

## **Wednesday, March 14**

1 Corinthians 12:1-11 *There are many different forms of activity, but in everybody it is the same God who is at work in them all.* (v.6)

Jimmy has been a member of our congregation for over thirty years. He arrives early, unlocks the doors, makes coffee, and checks the bathrooms to make sure they have enough paper towels and toilet paper. When people are publicly thanked for their ministry, Jimmy never seems to be included. There are always more "important" people to be recognized.

Jimmy recently suffered a terrible stroke. He now lives in a care facility, unable to speak. Suddenly, the doors weren't unlocked, there was no coffee waiting. The bathrooms didn't have enough paper towels and toilet paper. People complained loudly that these expected activities weren't being done.

Gradually, people began to realize that Jimmy had done all of those things. It was a humbling experience for all of us to realize that God had called Jimmy to be a Minister of Hospitality to all of us for thirty years.

I hope you find your congregation's unsung Jimmy. Give that faithful person your gratitude. They're just as important to the life of the faith community as the Clergy!

Genesis 50:15-26; Psalms 101, 109; Mark 8:11-26

### **Thursday, March 15**

Mark 8:27—9:1 *"But you," he asked them, "Who do you say I am?"* (v.29)

In my faith journey of fifty years, I've come to believe that this question by Jesus is the central question every Christian and congregation must answer. We must ask and answer this question continually, "Who is Jesus for me today?"

Many years ago, the headquarters of an American automobile company had a large portrait of the founder of the company in the headquarters reception area. Men who worked in the headquarters would doff their hats to the picture of the founder as they entered the building. Then they went off to their work, with all of the power struggles, careerism, and intrigues of corporate life.

The Church can become like that. We can offer gestures of respect to Jesus, then go about the "business" of Church, with all of the power struggles, careerism, and intrigues of Church life.

The Church is the Body of Christ. We cannot authentically be that without continually asking ourselves about the meaning and importance of Jesus Christ.

Exodus 1:6-22; Psalm 69; 1 Corinthians 12:12-26

### **Friday, March 16**

Mark 9:2-13 *There in their presence he was transfigured.* (v.2b)

The Transfiguration is something I've pondered a great deal. My birthday falls on August 6th, the Feast of the Transfiguration. My Trappist monk spiritual father has told me I need to frequently ponder the meaning of being born on this Feast Day.

The insight I've come to over and over again is the Transfiguration of Jesus is a promise to all Christians, that following Christ holds open to us the possibility we will eventually come to our own transformation into persons in whom the transfigured resurrection life of Jesus Christ has become fully manifest.

We often think about salvation as a reward added onto a life of faithfully following Christ. However, what lies at the end of our faith journey is so much more than that. Our journey in and with Christ will lead to an eternal union with God, fully incorporated into the life, love, and wholeness of the Holy Trinity. What miracle and mystery awaits us!

Exodus 2:1-22; Psalm 102; 1 Corinthians 12:27—13:3

**Saturday, March 17**

Exodus 2:23—3:15 *“Come no nearer,” God said. “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.”* (v.5)

Holy ground can be any place, at any time. Really, that’s the truth! Any time, any place we enter into prayer, and seek to be present with God, we are on holy ground.

Our Celtic Christian forbearers had a heightened sense of this truth. They wrote and spoke of it often. The circumstances of everyday life can become for us gates to heaven, because God is always there with us. God always awaits us with loving-kindness, affection, and hope.

Finding this holy ground requires two things of us: The first is willingness to encounter God in all our lives, even times, places, and circumstances that seem without God. The second is openness to actually being present with God. Everything, every person we meet, every activity we undertake has the potential to be an encounter with God.

Sound impossible? As your day unfolds, tell God exactly what you’re thinking and feeling. Ask God to be present with you. You’ll be surprised at how much holy ground you’ll experience!

Psalm 107:33-43, 108; 1 Corinthians 13:1-13; Mark 9:14-29

*by John Ferguson*

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