



▶ DAILY DEVOTIONAL.

Monday, 4/20/20

Author: Bridget Coughlin

Romans 15:13 (CEB)

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Every morning at the school where I taught, we had announcements over the intercom. Our principal would end by reading a thought for the day, followed by these words: "Make it a great day or not. The choice is yours."

We heard those words every morning and honestly, it became rather trite. But since I retired, I can't tell you how often I've said those words to myself. The truth is, it's an extraordinary sentiment. The Lord gives us the freedom every day to choose positivity or negativity. We can search for reasons to be joyful or search for reasons to be angry. We've all had days when circumstances outside of our control come crashing down. Scripture tells us to "find joy in all circumstances." Personally, I find this incredibly challenging! I don't think God expects us to never feel sad, melancholy or mournful. I think instead he wants us to be assured that no matter what difficult path we are walking, we can feel joy knowing God walks with us.

Each day is a new opportunity to make it a great day or not and the choice is ours. What will we choose?

Prayer: Dear Lord, we know we can find joy in your presence. But daily frustration and hurt can cause us to choose acrimony and cynicism. Forgive us when we don't try to focus on forgiveness and love. Help us to approach each day with gladness.

Tuesday, 4/21/20

Author: Gary Mountz

Ephesians 4:15 (CEB)

Instead, by speaking the truth with love, let's grow in every way into Christ ...

Meditating on the LORD one day the thought came clearly to my mind, an answer to my prayer for knowing what to do in a holy, God-ordained encounter/relationship. I heard, "Marinate the truth in love and distribute it to the poor and hungry." My quandary was over why the attitude of "love everyone like Jesus loved them and He will take care of the rest" and that the results were not forthcoming from those loved. They were not flocking to Jesus. Not even necessarily appreciative of what love was being extended. What's missing, I was asking.

The LORD reminded me of a time in my own life when I presented a truth to a group. It was a real, solid absolute truth, like “do not commit adultery” or “do not steal,” and the truth was “do not gossip.” This is the gangrene that destroys everything it touches. But why did it seem to fall on deaf ears? Why was the only one at the table feeling contrition, me? Within hours He took me to Ephesians 4:15, “Speak the truth in love.” Then I realized there had not been an ounce of love in the word I’d given, maybe a love and devotion to the truth and to God but not to the hearers. I was left dumbstruck with failure to Him.

So we live by His word, the Truth, in all its facets. When it comes to me it came with Love for me from His heart. That truth about not loving was stunning to me, like a jab in chest literally taking my breath away. That’s what truth in love does!

Peter presented probably the most stinging, harsh and even accusatory words ever spoken, not once but four times. And God totally change the hearts, minds and directions of thousands of lives. In Acts 2 it records Peter’s and the Holy Spirit’s initial words to the waiting world. Speaking of Jesus, he said to the crowd, “**you** nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men, and put Him to death.” Later in those first minutes of the Church he said again “God has made Him both LORD and Christ - This Jesus whom **you** crucified.” In Acts 2, on “that day there were added about three thousand lives.” What had happened? Verse 37 said when they heard, they were pierced to the heart (literally heart-stung), and cried out what shall we do? Repent (admit your wrong judgement of Jesus) and be baptized because He has forgiven your sins.” The Holy Spirit accompanies His words with an accompanying response, conviction with a revealed resolution.

Within days again in a crowd of curious onlookers (Acts 3, 4) they heard “**you** delivered and disowned Jesus ... **you** disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, but put to death the Prince of Life.” Then “many of those who had heard the message believed and the number of men came to be about five thousand.” The Holy Spirit presented His perfect words for these people and an accompanying response to believe in Jesus. A lame man walked, healed by Jesus through Peter and John and thousands heard the truth with Love for them and God and He changed the lives of thousands.

How could such harsh pointed words create “repentance and belief” and not a riot and beatings? Because Peter and John, as Spirit-inhabited believers, were now not mere men speaking their minds, but men enveloped and enlarged in love with a compelling word of great freedom and salvation. In a mutual loving relationship with God because of Christ Jesus’ accomplishments at Calvary they couldn’t help themselves from speaking out boldly with truth to a crowd that God dearly loves in spite of their sins. A crowd that looks almost exactly like us.

Therefore, be bold with the Love of God which will compel you to share the truth of Christ’s accomplishments at Calvary, doing so in love with Him and the hearers.

Prayer: Our Father, your wisdom and work are wonderful, thorough and perfect. We look to you for that wisdom as we see those about us. LORD we wish to present the truth in love as you lead us and to have no fear of man but such a complete respect and trust of you that we are compelled to speak out boldly with the truth in a loving way. Give us the tears of hard truth and grant the joy of salvation to all who hear and come to love and worship you. Because of Jesus, Amen.

Wednesday, 4/22/20

Worship Wednesday

“All Creatures of Our God and King”

Every Wednesday we look at a modern worship song or traditional hymn as a community. We hope this song will add an element of worship to your devotion life. Songs have a way of getting into your bones and giving words to a situation you may be facing or a mountaintop moment you are experiencing. There will be a link to the song and some of the scripture references used in the song as well as the lyrics. We hope you will listen to the song with the lyrics in front of you. If there is a part that sticks out to you, read that part aloud. Let that part of the song be your prayer for the morning.

Psalm 69:34 (CEB)

Let heaven and earth praise God, the oceans too, and all that moves within them!

All Creatures Of Our God And King

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wSFK7UiH5Us>

All creatures of our God and King, Lift up your voice and with us sing

O praise Him, Alleluia

Thou burning sun with golden beam Thou silver moon with softer gleam

O praise Him, O praise Him, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia

Thou rushing wind that art so strong, Ye clouds that sail in Heaven along

O praise Him, Alleluia

Thou rising moon in praise rejoice, Ye lights of evening find a voice

O praise Him, O praise Him, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia

Let all things their Creator bless, And worship Him in humbleness

O praise Him, Alleluia

Praise, praise the Father, praise the Son, And praise the Spirit, three in one

O praise Him, O praise Him, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia

All Creatures Of Our God And King lyrics © Capitol Christian Music Group

Thursday, 4/23/20

Author: Jennifer Smith

Leviticus 19:32 (CEB)

You must rise in the presence of an old person and respect the elderly. You must fear your God; I am the LORD.

Recently I saw in a news magazine that one of the newsworthy topics highlighted in 2019 was the divisiveness between the generations. Specifically, how younger generations are taking an economic and environmental stand against challenges placed on them by older generations.

Despite the issues our world faces, can we find connection with one another if we attempt to work together toward solutions? I think so. When you look at lineage, the Bible marvelously shows God's plan through the generations, all leading up to the birth of Jesus. His plan never deviated but it took multiple generations to bring it to fruition. We have much to learn from one another - both young and old need to see how their part in the big picture matters for all generations, both current and future.

I laugh when I remember how a young child said to me years ago, “wow, you’re OLD!” to which I replied, “I’m older than dirt!” Now that I’m even older, I think of us being created from the Earth and we will return to the Earth as our bodies die. However, our spirit will live on. “Ashes to ashes, and dust to dust.” Our time on Earth is only temporary but what a lasting legacy we can provide by living our lives for Christ Jesus.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, in you there is nothing that separates us from one another. All those who worship in your name are children of God, now and forever. Make us One in you Christ Jesus and bring a spirit of unitedness so the world may see in you, we are all one. In your most precious and holy name, Amen.

Friday, 4/24/20

Scripture Fridays

“Hebrews 7”

Every Friday, we read a section of scripture together. There is a larger section of reading for these days. We believe immersion in scripture changes people from the inside out. On Fridays we hope you spend your time reading the section, knowing that our entire community is reading scripture together. If you cannot get through the whole section, that is totally fine! Read it in one sitting, read it throughout the week, read it any time you have free time. Any reading will be a gift to your spiritual life. Each week you will receive the next chapter of the scripture for your personal reading. We will provide you with the CEB translation. We hope you will continue to ask the questions: What? What is the scripture saying? No, really, what did it actually say? So what? Why is this important? What does it reveal about God? Now what? The Bible is a book of action. What is your action? May God bless this reading each week.

Hebrews 7 (CEB)

¹ This Melchizedek, who was king of Salem and priest of the Most High God, met Abraham as he returned from the defeat of the kings, and Melchizedek blessed him. ² Abraham gave a tenth of everything to him. His name means first “king of righteousness,” and then “king of Salem,” that is, “king of peace.” ³ He is without father or mother or any family. He has no beginning or end of life, but he’s like God’s Son and remains a priest for all time.

A priest like Melchizedek

⁴ See how great Melchizedek was! Abraham, the father of the people, gave him a tenth of everything he captured. ⁵ The descendants of Levi who receive the office of priest have a commandment under the Law to collect a tenth of everything from the people who are their brothers and sisters, though they also are descended from Abraham. ⁶ But Melchizedek, who isn’t related to them, received a tenth of everything from Abraham and blessed the one who had received the promises. ⁷ Without question, the less important person is blessed by the more important person. ⁸ In addition, in one case a tenth is received by people who die, and in the other case, the tenth is received by someone who continues to live, according to the record. ⁹ It could be said that Levi, who received a tenth, paid a tenth through Abraham ¹⁰ because he was still in his ancestor’s body when Abraham paid the tenth to Melchizedek.

¹¹ So if perfection came through the levitical office of priest (for the people received the Law under the priests), why was there still a need to speak about raising up another priest according to the order of Melchizedek rather than one according to the order of Aaron? ¹² When the order of the priest changes, there has to be a change in the Law as well. ¹³ The person we are talking about belongs to another tribe, and no one ever served at the altar from that tribe. ¹⁴ It's clear that our Lord came from the tribe of Judah, but Moses never said anything about priests from that tribe. ¹⁵ And it's even clearer if another priest appears who is like Melchizedek. ¹⁶ He has become a priest by the power of a life that can't be destroyed, rather than a legal requirement about physical descent. ¹⁷ This is confirmed:

*You are a priest forever,
according to the order of Melchizedek.*

Able to save completely

¹⁸ On the one hand, an earlier command is set aside because it was weak and useless ¹⁹ (because the Law made nothing perfect). On the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God. ²⁰ And this was not done without a solemn pledge! The others have become priests without a solemn pledge, ²¹ but this priest was affirmed with a solemn pledge by the one who said,

*The Lord has made a solemn pledge
and will not change his mind:
You are a priest forever.*

²² As a result, Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant. ²³ The others who became priests are numerous because death prevented them from continuing to serve. ²⁴ In contrast, he holds the office of priest permanently because he continues to serve forever. ²⁵ This is why he can completely save those who are approaching God through him, because he always lives to speak with God for them.

²⁶ It's appropriate for us to have this kind of high priest: holy, innocent, incorrupt, separate from sinners, and raised high above the heavens. ²⁷ He doesn't need to offer sacrifices every day like the other high priests, first for their own sins and then for the sins of the people. He did this once for all when he offered himself. ²⁸ The Law appoints people who are prone to weakness as high priests, but the content of the solemn pledge, which came after the Law, appointed a Son who has been made perfect forever.