

began to keep chickens so that they could have eggs in the mornings and fried chicken on Sunday.

I well remember watching through the fence as our neighbor would select a chicken for Sunday dinner and take it to the stump. I was fascinated by the way the chicken would run around the yard, without its head, until it finally fell over. Many of us are like that chicken, running around without our head—i.e., running around in all directions at once, on our own, without seeking guidance from the Lord. If we will stop and seek Him and ask Him to forgive us—He will—and He will forget what we have done to separate ourselves from Him. What a wonderful God we serve!

Psalm 102; Ephesians 5:1-20; Matthew 9:9-17

Saturday, June 4

Psalm 108 *I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the peoples, and I will sing praises to you among the nations.* (v.3)

The verse above is the definition of a “witness.” A “witness” is able to tell what he or she has seen, heard and experienced, and what is told is also called a “witness.” Telling what God has done for us is a good way to bring others to the Lord. It is non-threatening and very productive.

When we have received Jesus, the Son of God, as Savior and Lord, his Holy Spirit gives us all that we need to go forth unto the people and into the nations to tell what our glorious God had done for us. He will use even shy or introverted people if they will draw upon His strength. The good news will be related in everyday conversations, over coffee, in offices, over the phone, after church, greeting an old friend on the street. We may be used to “sow seeds,” simply giving the person something to think about, or we may experience the wonderful blessing of being asked questions about our Lord or being asked to pray with a person who wants to receive the wonderful gift which God has given. We must wait upon the Lord, and not get ahead of Him.

How wonderful, that God would use us to spread the good news of His Son, Jesus Christ. How awesome, that we will be used to bring others into His Kingdom. Prepare my heart, O God, purify me and make me more like you, so that others will come to know you through my life.

Ezekiel 36:22-27; Psalm 107:34-43; Ephesians 6:10-24; Matthew 9:18-26

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Sunday, May 29

Luke 10:17-24 *“Rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”* (v.20 NRSV)

Our joy has been “so full” since a grown daughter (who had made some decisions leading her away from the life lived in grace) prayed to recommit her life to Jesus Christ as her Lord and Savior. Her delight in being a child of God refreshes and renews us!

Recently, she called to tell us of a conversation she had with a man in her adult Sunday school class. The man shared that he felt rather upset because a “really sinful” person could receive salvation on his death bed if he “only believed.” “What about those of us who have lived the “good life” for years?”, he asked. She called to ask what I thought about it. “I think that the man has missed the point,” I said. “We can’t earn our way into heaven. Eternal life is a gift from God to us—a precious gift bought with the blood of His Son. Those of us who love Him will want to do good works because we love Him, not because it will earn us heavenly points.”

We must accept the gift of God’s Son, Jesus Christ, in faith and, once we have received him, we will want to share the good news with others so that they, also, may receive him—even with their last breath. We are the Body of Christ, and are to be Jesus’ hands, feet, and heart to bring healing and freedom to the lost. When you stop to think about it, what could we ever do to deserve what God has done for us? All of the “good works” in the world wouldn’t be enough to “buy” a place in heaven.

I want to rejoice and sing because my name is written in heaven! I didn’t deserve it and I could never deserve it, but God did it for me!

Exodus 3:1-12; Psalms 66, 67; Hebrews 12:18-29

Monday, May 30

Joshua 1:1-9 *“Do not be frightened or dismayed for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”* (v.9)

My husband and I count among our dearest friends a man who directs a home for abused boys. This man’s life and the lives of his wife and children have been full of sacrifice, and yet they are blessed in many, many ways. They have been faithful to the calling of God and God has been faithful to them and to the boys in the home. The man has had times of weariness, of worry over finances for the home, of concern for his own family. When these times occur, “someone’s” phone rings (perhaps our phone) and the man asks his friends and prayer supporters to pray for him and the concern. The power of prayer is truly awesome! God has never failed our friend in this ministry, and I believe that the reason is that God comes first in his heart. He desires to do God’s will. He listens to God through the Scriptures, through his own heart in prayer, and through his Christian friends.

As I read today's Scriptures, I saw a familiar pattern emerge. God makes His will for us very plain and He gives us all that we need to follow Him. He also gives us the free will to follow our own way or the way of the world. The evil one makes the "wrong way" look very attractive and desirable until we find ourselves caught in a tangled web. Only God can rescue us.

Psalms 89:1-18; Ephesians 3:1-13; Matthew 8:5-17

Tuesday, May 31

Matthew 8:18-27 *"Why are you afraid, you of little faith?"* (v.26)

I have been built up in faith by the Lord over a period of many years and yet I became a quivering mass of rising panic upon hearing that one of our grandchildren had been found to have a congenital skeletal abnormality. Only after talking with a friend who is a fine surgeon was I able to give up fear to the Lord.

I wish that I could tell you that I conquered the fear and went straight to the Lord in faith at the very first. I did cry out to God for help, but I sought for solutions and explanations before I was able to truly give it to Him. We still do not know what the outcome of tests for our little granddaughter will be, but we are now resting in peace—knowing that God is in control and that He loves her.

I love to picture Jesus asleep in the boat. I see him rousing and lifting his head drowsily to calmly survey the situation, and sleepily asking them why they are afraid; and then sighing and getting up to rebuke the sea and the wind (which instantly became calm). He didn't stop loving his disciples. He just seemed perturbed over their lack of faith.

How like the disciples of that day are we! We have not yet learned how to draw upon that power which is our gift through the Holy Spirit. We will grow up only by staying close to Jesus, taking in his word and trusting in his love for us.

1 Samuel 16:1-13a; Psalms 97, 99, 100; Ephesians 3:14-21

Wednesday, June 1

Isaiah 4:2-6 *Indeed, over all the glory will be a canopy. It will serve as a pavilion, a shade by day from the heat, and a refuge and a shelter from the storm and rain.* (vv.5b-6)

Today we read of chaos, of demonic possession, judgmentalism, the pain of those who are persecuted wrongly and, in Isaiah, the peace which comes from residing in the presence of God's glory.

The townspeople of the Gadarenes did not want our Lord's presence. I believe that—for some—there is a great fear of change. For some of us, the changes that deliverance and healing will bring are beyond our ability to cope. We all know that changes in lifestyle, in thought patterns, are very difficult to achieve. We are creatures of habit and habit often becomes a kind of bondage. The known, even though it may be very painful, is often unconsciously chosen over the unknown, although the unknown is full of promise from the Lord. This reaction is called fear.

Where is our freedom to be found? The word of God tells us that it is found in Him. To seek Him, to be obedient to His ways, to ask to be in His presence is to come under His canopy. A canopy covers us from the elements. We may picture the canopy or pavilion in different ways. I remember that, in the Florida of my childhood, ladies often carried their parasols with them to shield their skin from the sun and heat. Parasols were often ruffled, seldom waterproof, and sometimes turned inside out in a strong wind. How infinitely sturdy and unshakable, on the other hand, is the canopy provided for us by our Lord.

Psalms 101, 109; Ephesians 4:1-16; Matthew 8:28-34

Thursday, June 2

Ephesians 4:17-32 *They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of their ignorance and hardness of heart.* (v.18)

Today's Scriptures are beautiful, full of the presence of the glory of God. Why would we ever do anything to separate ourselves from the glory of God? I suppose that few people would deliberately do so but, often, we become focused on hurtful things—such as anger, resentment, jealousy—and we become hardened in our hearts because we are no longer focusing on God, but on the problem.

I once knew a real life "prodigal daughter" story. One daughter of the family went her way and forsook the ways that she had been taught. Another daughter of the family had been the "good daughter." She had never disappointed her family and had been loving, kind, and responsible in her behavior. The wayward daughter had many problems over the years and was as separated from her family as she was separated from God. The "good daughter" was disappointed, hurt, and then grew angry and, finally, resentful.

Years later, the "wayward daughter" repented, prayed for healing, and received the love and forgiveness of the Lord and her parents. The heart of the "good daughter" had hardened toward her sister and the (now) "redeemed daughter" committed the broken relationship to prayer. The last time I heard, the "redeemed daughter" was praying daily for reconciliation and counting on the Lord to work in her sister's heart. I believe that the "good sister's" heart will soften with time. Do you? Let us take care, lest our hearts be hardened, even by righteous concerns. Let us keep our hearts soft and turned toward the glory of the Lord. He is the one who convicts, who heals, and who changes hearts.

Zechariah 4:1-14; Psalm 105:1-22; Matthew 9:1-8

Friday, June 3

Jeremiah 31:27-34 *I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.* (v.34b)

What a wonderful promise! Today, we read of the depression and futility of man on his own in the psalm, and in the Gospel we learn of mercy from Jesus. Isn't it wonderful to know that, when we are forgiven, God will remember our sin no more.

When I was a little girl, during World War II, our next-door neighbors began to keep chickens. In those days many things were rationed, and people