

Devotions – April 28 – May4, 2019

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Sunday, April 28, 2019

Text: John 20:19-31 (*The Message*)

(v. 24-25) But Thomas, sometimes called the Twin, one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples told him, “We saw the Master.” But he said, “Unless I see the nail holes in his hands, put my finger in the nail holes, and stick my hand in his side, I won’t believe it.”

(v. 30-31) Jesus provided far more God-revealing signs than are written down in this book. These are written down so you will believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and in the act of believing, have real and eternal life in the way he personally revealed it.

Thomas may not have been the only disciple struggling with belief issues after Jesus’ crucifixion. As Jesus was placed on the cross and died before them, were any of the other disciples having trouble believing what they *were* seeing? This wasn’t supposed to happen, was it? Then, these fearful, wondering disciples gathered behind locked doors, actually saw their risen Master! Standing, speaking among them, they saw Jesus with their own eyes. They were not just relieved, they were exuberant! What they saw with their eyes, confirmed what they knew in their hearts--this Jesus was their Master, their God.

We are not able to see the nail holes and side piercings as Thomas did, but these “God-revealing” signs have been written for us and recorded in John so that we will believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. And in believing, experience eternal life.

Let us pray: *Thank you, Jesus, for the times we doubt and the God-revealing signs you place before us that strengthen our faith. Amen.*



Monday, April 29, 2019

Text: Psalm 139:13-16 (*NRSV*)

**For it was you who formed my inward parts;
you knit me together in my mother’s womb.
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.
My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,**

**intricately woven in the depths of the earth.
Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.
In your book were written all the days that were formed for me,
when none of them as yet existed.**

Today is my birthday! Celebrations of this day have never really been big events in our home, by my choice. But after sixty some years, I seem to reflect more about birth and life on this day. The words of this psalm of David were a frequent prayer of mine during the times we were expecting children and now again as we wait during the pregnancies of our grandchildren. I appreciate the knitting analogy of our prenatal formation. Detailed and intricate is the development of all our inward parts, fashioned by the Master Craftsman.

Even after all these years, when doctors advise us to plan on having these parts replaced due to wear or disease, we are fearfully and wonderfully made. From the time we were an unformed substance through the details of each day we live, all is known and seen by God. He has known each mistake, joy, tear and trial we have faced and those that lie ahead. And will love us through it all.

So, this year, be warned. I'm putting all 63 candles on my cake and thanking God for each breath it takes to blow them out!

Let us pray: Creator God, you designed each of us to be your special child. Thank you for loving us more than we can even imagine. Help us to show your great love to others as we live each day. Amen.



Tuesday, April 30, 2019

Text: John 21:1-15 (*The Message*)

(v. 7-9) Then the disciple Jesus loved said to Peter, “It’s the Master!” When Simon Peter realized that it was the Master, he threw on some clothes, for he was stripped for work, and dove into the sea. The other disciples came in by boat for they weren’t far from land, a hundred yards or so, pulling along the net full of fish. When they got out of the boat, they saw a fire laid, with fish and bread cooking on it.

(v. 13-15a) After breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” “Yes, Master, you know I love you.”

I wonder how the disciples spent those first weeks after the resurrection of Jesus, their friend, their teacher and their savior. Perhaps they experienced times of joyous wonder mixed with times of fear and doubt. In this reading, we learn that Peter went fishing and some of the others went along. They took care of their daily needs. But they worked all night for nothing, until they encountered their risen Lord. Taking his suggestion, they cast their nets again and found the

nets filled with fish too heavy to pull into the boat. They were given a second chance and caught their limit! But Jesus wanted more than breakfast. Peter had failed him, denying even knowing him, and needed a second chance. This time Peter was up to the task and his faith statement was firm, “Yes, Master, you know that I love you.”

Let us pray: *Gracious God, you are so anxious to erase the separation caused when we fail you. Thank you for paying the price of these second chances and help us to boldly answer with Peter: Yes, Master, you know that I love you. Amen.*



Wednesday, May 1, 2019

Text: John 3:1-5 (NSRV)

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.” Jesus answered him, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.” Nicodemus said to him, “How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?” Jesus answered, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit.

Nicodemus came to Jesus at night making a statement of faith and Jesus teaches him about new life, being born anew. But Nicodemus doesn’t understand. He comes from a long line of religious leaders who teach that the kingdom of God is for those who do the right things. As Jesus explains to him the need to be born of water and of the spirit, we really aren’t told in these verses whether Nicodemus understands. I can picture him rubbing his beard or scratching his head. It is not easy to understand this new life in Christ. It’s more than a second chance to do the right thing. This new life in the spirit is a free ticket to the kingdom of God; a gift of love and grace. This is the Easter message for each of us. Jesus died and was raised to life so that, believing in Him, we may have this new life. The old life is gone; this new life will not be easy, but we walk each day in the presence of the living Lord.

Let us pray: *Thank you, dear Jesus, for living and dying for us. Help us to be strong in the spirit each day; as we turn from our old life in darkness to new life in you. Amen*



Thursday, May 2, 2019

Text: 1 Peter 1:3-5 (*The Message*)

What a God we have! And how fortunate we are to have him, this father of our Master Jesus! Because Jesus was raised from the dead, we've been given a brand new life and have everything to live for, including a future in heaven--and the future starts now! God is keeping careful watch over us and the future. The Day is coming when you'll have it all--life healed and whole.

The joyous message of Easter isn't over. Can you hear it over the din of senseless violence and suffering we see in the news each day? There are silent signs of new life all around us as spring bulbs burst forth amidst the last snows of winter. Robins begin nest building again in preparation for new life. We too have a brand-new life that includes a future in heaven. Peter boldly reminds the early Christians in exile, that this promised future starts now! Looking forward to the day when our lives will be healed and whole and we suffer no more.

Let us pray: *God of new life, thank you for reminding us of the Easter message in the signs of new life we see around us and in us. May we speak and live as confidently as Peter facing each day and living toward that promised future. Amen.*



Friday, May 3, 2019

Text: 1 Peter 1:13-16 (*The Message*)

So roll up your sleeves, put your mind in gear, be totally ready to receive the gift that's coming when Jesus arrives. Don't lazily slip back into those old grooves of evil, doing just what you feel like doing. You didn't know any better then; you do now. As obedient children, let yourselves be pulled into a way of life shaped by God's life, a life energetic and blazing with holiness. God said, "I am holy; you be holy."

These words of Peter were first given to early Christians in exile. Now, I've never been in exile, most of my life I have been blessed to live in comfortable, familiar surroundings. But there have been times when I felt totally out of place. My first year at college was like that. I moved from a rural community to a campus of 40,000 students. I saw things that surprised me for sure; different cultures, religious communities and lifestyles. It could have been easy to fall into a way of life different from the way I grew up. Perhaps similar to the listeners of Peter's words here. At times it can be hard to stay the course of what you know is right. This reading reminds us as well as the early Christians, to roll up our sleeves, get ready to work, and be steadfast.

Let us pray: *Lord, thank you for these words that encourage us to be steadfast and not swayed by those around us that would influence us away from you. Give us strength to live a new life, as Peter says, energetic and blazing with holiness! Amen.*



Saturday, May 4, 2019

Text: 1 Peter 1:22-23 (NRSV)

Now that you have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth so that you have genuine mutual love, love one another deeply from the heart. You have been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God.

Peter continues to encourage the early Christians to live out their new lives in tough times. Loving the people around us is not easy sometimes. The Message translation makes that statement even stronger: *Now that you've cleaned up your lives by following the truth, love one another as if your lives depended on it.*

We all display human qualities and actions that are hard to love. Peter knows this well. His actions disappointed himself and other followers of Jesus. Like many of us, he may have thought, "What was I thinking?!" But in these times of human failings, when we disappoint God, ourselves and others, grace abounds, forgiveness heals, and the Spirit strengthens us to "love one another deeply, from the heart."

Let us pray: *Father of us all, you have made each of us a unique combination of strengths and weaknesses. We work to show your love and truth only to fall in failure. Thank you for picking us up each time we fail and setting us once again on the right way. Amen.*

