

Devotions – April 26 – May 2, 2020

By Karen Carter

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Sunday, April 26, 2020

Mine—God’s

Text: Psalm 24:1

“The earth is the Lord’s, and everything that is in it.”

As we bowed our heads over lunch, my long-time friend Di prayed, “Father, thank you for letting us breathe your air and eat your food.” She had just gone through a difficult job loss, so her heartfelt trust in God and her recognition that everything belongs to him profoundly moved me. I found myself thinking: “Do I honestly understand that even the basic, everyday things in my life are really God’s, and that he’s simply letting me use them?”

When King David received offerings from the people of Israel for building the temple in Jerusalem, he prayed, “But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from your hand.” Then he added, “All of it belongs to you” (I Chronicles 29:14, 16).

Scripture tells us that even “the ability to produce wealth” and earn a living comes from him. Understanding that all we have is borrowed encourages us to loosen our grip on the stuff of this world and live with open hands and hearts . . . sharing freely because we’re deeply grateful for the kindnesses we receive every day.

God is a generous giver . . . so loving that he even gave up his Son “for us all.” Because we have been given so much, may we give him our heartfelt thanks for all blessings, both small and large.

Let us pray: *Dear God, thank you for the many borrowed blessings I have from you. Amen.*



Monday, April 27, 2020

Even If . . .

Text: Daniel 3:17, 18

“If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; He will deliver us out of your hand, O King. But if not, be it known to you, O King, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image which you have set up.”

Sometimes life deals us a tremendous blow. Other times the miraculous happens.

Three young men, captives in Babylon, stood before a fired-up furnace and a fearsome ruler of that kingdom and boldly proclaimed that under no circumstances would they worship the golden image of gold towering over them. Together they declared: “If we are thrown into the roaring fire in that furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he is able to deliver us from your majesty’s hand. But even if he does not, we want you to know. . . we will not worship that image.”

These three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, were hurled into the fiery furnace; God miraculously brought them out so that not even a hair was singed; their clothing was smoke-free. They were ready to die, but their trust in God was unwavering -- “even if” he had not saved them.

God’s desire is that we cling to him – even if our loved one isn’t healed, even if we lose our job, even if we are persecuted. Sometimes God rescues us from danger in this life, and sometimes he doesn’t. But the truth we can hold firmly to is this: “The God we serve is able,” loves us, and is with us in every fiery trial – even if...

Let us pray: *Dear God, we ask for steadfast faith, strength, and hope for each day – no matter what the circumstances. Amen.*



Tuesday, April 28, 2020

Like a Little Child

Text: Mark 10:14

“Jesus said to them, ‘Let the children come to Me, and do not hinder them.’”

That darling little girl moved joyfully and gracefully to the music of praise. She was the only one in the aisle, but that didn’t stop her from twirling and spinning to the music. Her mother, with a smile on her face, didn’t try to stop her.

My heart was lifted as I watched, and I longed to join her – but I didn’t. I think I’d lost the unselfconscious expression long, long ago. Even though we are meant to grow and mature and put childish ways behind us, we were never meant to lose the joy and wonder, especially in our relationship with God.

When Jesus lived on earth, he welcomed little children to him, and he often referred to them in his teaching. On one occasion, he scolded his disciples for trying to discourage parents from

bringing their children to him for a blessing, saying, “Let the children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.” Jesus was referring to the childlike qualities of implicit trust – joy and wonder, but also simplicity, dependence, and humility.

Childlike wonder and joy (and so much more) open our hearts to be more open to him. he is waiting for us to run into his open arms.

Let us pray: *Abba (Daddy) Father, help us to be more childlike in our relationship with you. We long to be filled with incredible wonder at all you have done for us. Amen.*



Wednesday, April 29, 2020

Age-Old Wisdom

Text: Job 12:12

“Is not wisdom found among the aged? Does not long life bring understanding?”

Several years ago, a Singapore newspaper published a special report that contained life lessons gleaned from eight senior citizens. It opened with the following words: “While aging brings challenges to mind and body, it can also lead to an expansion in other realms. There is an abundance of emotional and social knowledge, qualities which scientists are beginning to define as ‘wisdom – the wisdom of elders.’”

Indeed, wise older people have much to teach us about life. But in the Bible, we meet a newly-crowned king who failed to recognize this.

King Solomon had recently died, and in I Kings 12:3, we read that “the whole assembly of Israel went to Rehoboam” with a petition. They asked the new king to lighten the harsh labor and heavy taxes his father Solomon had demanded of them. In return, they would loyally serve Rehoboam.

At first, the king consulted the elders. But he rejected their advice and accepted the foolish counsel of the young men who had grown up with him. In the end, he made the burdens on the people even greater! His rashness cost him most of his kingdom.

All of us need the counsel that comes with ages of experience, especially from those who have walked with God and listened well to his counsel. Just think of the accumulated wisdom God has given them! They have much to share with us about the Lord and about life. Let us each decide to seek them out and give a listening ear to their wisdom.

Are you facing a major decision? Seek out the counsel of those who are wise and mature believers.

Let us pray: *Lord, help us to avoid the mistakes of youth and to draw from the wisdom of those who lean on and trust in you. Amen.*



Thursday, April 30, 2020

Rest in the Rock

Text: Psalm 61:2

“I call to you when my heart grows faint; lead me to the rock that is higher than I.”

Long before we ever heard of the Coronavirus, I remember shopping for a humidifier. An older woman paced back and forth down the appliance aisle. Wondering if she, too, was shopping for a humidifier, we chatted. Soon she commented about a flu virus in our area, one that left her with a lingering cough and a persistent headache.

A few minutes later, she launched into a bitter tirade, expressing her theory about the origin of this particular virus – and how no one would listen to her. Unsure of what to do with this very sudden turn, I listened. She soon left the store, still angry, very frustrated, and with no humidifier. Though she had clearly expressed her frustration, I couldn’t do anything to take away her pain.

David, Israel’s second king, wrote psalms as an outlet to express his anger and frustration with God. But David knew that God not only listened, he could also do something about his pain. In Psalm 61, he writes: “I call to you when my heart grows faint; lead me to the rock that is higher than I.” God was his refuge, the rock to which David ran.

When we’re in pain, David’s example is good to follow. We can head to the “rock that is higher” or lead someone there. I wish I had mentioned God to the woman in the store. While God may not take away all of our pain, we can rest in the peace that he provides and the firm assurance that he hears our cry.

Let us pray: *Father God, make us mindful of those in need of a listening ear and the hope of your presence. Amen.*



Friday, May 1, 2020

Pulling Together

Text: Hebrews 10:24

“Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works.”

Why more than five million people a year pay good money to run several miles over an obstacle course where they must ascend vertical walls, slog through mud, and climb up a pipe with water gushing down on them is far beyond me. Some see this as a personal challenge to push their limit of endurance or to conquer their fears. For others, the attraction is teamwork where competitors help support each other. One person called it a “no judgment zone” where people who are strangers will reach out to help each other to finish the race.

The Bible urges us to pursue teamwork as a model of living out our faith in Jesus. “Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”

Our goal as followers of Jesus, is not to “finish first” in the race of faith, but to reach out in tangible ways of encouragement, setting an example by lending a helping hand along the way.

The day will come when we complete our life on earth. Until then, let’s spur each other on, be ready to help, and keep pulling together every day.

Let us pray: *Heavenly Father, give us eyes to see and the strength to help one another in the race of faith this day. Amen.*



Saturday, May 2, 2020

Blooming in Just the Right Spot

Text: I Samuel 20:16

“So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David.”

“A weed is a plant that grows where you don’t want it,” my green-thumbed neighbor told me when she was helping me with a Girl Scout project long ago. I wanted to leave the corn plant that had “volunteered” among the peas in my backyard garden. But she, who had grown up on a farm, instructed me to pull it out. That lone cornstalk would do nothing but choke the peas and rob them of needed nutrients.

Human beings aren't plants; we have minds of our own and our free will. But sometimes we try to bloom where God doesn't intend for us to be.

King Saul's son, the warrior-prince Jonathan, could have done that. He had every reason to expect to be king. However, he saw God's blessing on David, and he recognized the envy and pride in his own father. So, rather than grasping for a throne that would never be his, Jonathan became David's dearest friend, even to the point of saving his life.

There are those who would say that Jonathan gave up too much, but he made a choice as to how he wished to be remembered. How would we want to be remembered - like the ambitious Saul, who clung to his kingdom, only to lose it? Or like Jonathan, who protected the life of a man who would become an honored ancestor of Jesus?

God's plan is always far better than our own. We can fight against it and resemble a misplaced seed. Or we can accept his direction and become flourishing, fruitful plants in his garden. He leaves the choice with us.

Let us pray: *Lord, please forgive us for those times when we acted as if you had planted us in the wrong place. Help us to see what you have for us to do today. Amen.*

