

Good News Daily

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Sunday, April 28

Psalm 24 *The earth is the LORD'S and all it contains, the world and those who dwell in it. For he has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers.* (vv.1-2 NAS)

The Hebrew word used for “earth” (transliterated: *erets*) means the physical planet while the word used for “world” (*tebel*) refers to the “social world” or human inhabitants of the earth. These verses reaffirm the story of creation told so eloquently in the first chapters of Genesis.

I love the land. I enjoy tilling the soil, pulling weeds, planting seeds, and watching things grow. Some of Jesus' most beloved parables were parables of the land about mustard seeds, weeds, the sower, workers in the vineyard, the vine and the branches, etc. Jesus used these images because he knew they would connect with his hearers. When I work in my garden, I feel a sense of joy to know that working the land is what humans have done ever since our creation. Farming (not prostitution) is really the world's oldest profession.

There is no “spiritual world” versus a “physical world” because it is all a “spiritual world.” Preserving the integrity of the earth—protecting the rivers, seas, soil; maintaining the forests and recycling as much as possible—is a spiritual endeavor. Make no mistake about it; God created the whole world and expects us to take care of it.

Leviticus 8:1-13, 30-36; Psalm 29; Hebrews 12:1-14; Luke 4:16-30

Include in your prayers: Our country; for wisdom and guidance for our leaders and the leaders of all nations; for our armed forces and their families, especially Kyle Irving, Dylan Jenkins, Nick Layden and Rhett Price, and those now in danger and any continuing to struggle; for our enemies; for peace – especially in Ukraine, justice and reconciliation in all places where there is conflict, especially among the peoples of the Middle East; for Haiti and Bondeau; for victims of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster on its 38th anniversary, and for the wise stewardship of nuclear resources; and for Todd and Patsy McGregor and their work with SAMS training missionaries.

Monday, April 29

Psalm 56 *My foes have trampled upon me all day long, for they are many who fight proudly against me. When I am afraid, I will put my trust in thee.* (vv.2-3)

The psalmist is not paranoid because there really were people against him. After September 11, 2001, most of us were shocked to realize that so many people hated Americans. Members of the al-Qaeda network spent their lives plotting ways to destroy us. While the reasons for their hatred are debatable, the reality of it is not.

That year, the Wall Street Journal publisher, Peter Kann, wrote in his annual report to readers: “We have all been vividly reminded (and a new generation has suddenly discovered) that there is evil in this world, not merely debatable degrees of moral ambiguity. That this should be so significant is a sad reflection on a moral relativism that has become pervasive and debilitating....” M. Scott Peck, author of *The Road Less Traveled*, told stories of evil people in his 1983 book *People of The Lie*. He wrote in its introduction, “This is not a nice book. It is about our dark side, and in large part about the...members of our human community I frankly judge to be evil.”

No honest Christian faith can fail to recognize evil and evil people. The more responsibilities you hold and the more decisions you make that affect people, the more likely you have enemies. My advice: Be wise, be discerning, and be prepared for evil at all times.

Leviticus 16:1-19; Psalms 57, 58; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

Include in your prayers: Ricardo Acuña, Rick Anderson, Ann Ballard, Kay Bailey, Elizabeth Bastion, June Baxter, Paul Beresford, Christopher Brassington, Margaret Brewster, Ray Browne, Bill and Barbara Buttner, Barbara Carlson, Laurie Caudle, Linton and Gloria Chung, Nancy H. Cole, and Leslie Cook.

Tuesday, April 30

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 *Therefore encourage one another, and build up one another, just as you also are doing.* (v.11)

No verse in the New Testament contains clearer “marching orders” for a local church than this one. Our first duty within a body of believers is to encourage and support one another. Without encouragement, we will not have the strength or resolve to go out into the world to do works of charity and proclaim the gospel.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German pastor and theologian who was executed by Hitler’s firing squad because of his Christian witness, wrote these words in his book *Life Together*: “The physical presence of other Christians is a source of incomparable joy and strength to the believer. God has willed that we should seek and find God’s living Word in the testimony of other Christians, in the mouths of human beings. Therefore, Christians need other Christians who speak God’s word to them.”

I like going to church because there I receive encouragement, support, and appreciation from other Christians. But it’s like the mail: to get it, you also have to give it. Next time you go to church, seek an opportunity to say some kind words of encouragement to others.

Leviticus 16:20-34; Psalms 61, 62; Matthew 6:7-15

Include in your prayers: Our Presiding Bishop Michael Curry, Margaret Dunstan, Celeste Dysard, Joan Engskow, Dee Garafano, Charlie Gasperino, Jerry Hardin, Pam Heatley, and Tom Henry.

Wednesday, May 1

1 Thessalonians 5:12-28 *But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction.* (v.12)

During my rebellious days as a young man, I resented some people in positions of authority, never wanting anyone to “tell me what to do.” That attitude also led to more than one job failure. When I was 27, I accepted Jesus and submitted myself to his leadership. In doing so, I learned to submit myself to the leadership of others in both secular and spiritual realms. In other words, I became “teachable.” I’ve learned to take directions from others, including pastors, supervisors, and others in leadership roles. That may have been the most valuable lesson I ever learned.

While I have since held several leadership roles, there are many areas of life where I am a follower. I don’t think anyone can become a successful leader until he or she has learned to follow. Jesus first words to his disciples were “Follow me!”—not “help me out” or “give me some advice.” Until we learn to submit to appropriate spiritual leaders, God will never give us the opportunity to develop our leadership skills.

Leviticus 19:1-18; Psalm 72; Matthew 6:19-24

Include in your prayers: Vicki Huber, Mary Imle, Cindy Islip, Jacqui and Harry Kapinowski, Fran Labossiere, Nick Layden, Tom Lefevre, Taylor Lunn, the family of Elias Mansour, Elaine Mariggio, Emily Mather, and the McGrath-Burnett family.

Thursday, May 2

Leviticus 19:26-37 *“Do not turn to mediums or spiritists; do not seek them out to be defiled by them. I am the LORD your God.”* (v.31)

Astrology is the ancient science that claims to discover the influence of stars and planets on persons or events. Its resurgence on recent years is due in part to the declining influence of biblical principles in Western civilization. It’s not uncommon to find even professing Christians who read the astrology charts. The Bible clearly condemns the use of mediums, spiritualists, and astrology. Referring to astrologers and “those who prophesy by the stars,” Isaiah says that “they have become like stubble, fire burns them; they cannot deliver themselves from the power of the flame” (Isaiah 47:13-14).

Why? They're condemned because believers have direct access to God. We do not need to use a "medium" or study the planets in order to know what we should do or what God has in store for us. Stars and planets do not influence our lives; only God claims that kind of influence.

It defies common sense to believe that those born in certain months or spans of times have similar personality characteristics. This is one of those cases where Christians have a duty to admonish and correct those who may engage in harmful practices. We'll read more about that tomorrow.

Psalms 70, 71; 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12; Matthew 6:25-34

Include in your prayers: Bob Montheard and Pam DeFelice, Marilyn Pariseleti, Peter Pawlikowski, Jim and Jerre Rannie, Charles and Kathy Sakin, Dona Scoville, and Elizabeth Sibley.

Friday, May 3

Matthew 7:1-12 *"You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly enough to take the speck out of your brother's eye."* (v.5)

This verse does not say that we should neglect or overlook the speck that is in our brother's eye. There may be occasions when it's necessary to admonish others. Paul urges Christians to "admonish the unruly" (1 Thessalonians 5:14) and even to "reject a factious man after a first and second warning" (Titus 3:10). Psychologists have long recognized that we are most likely to feel irritated by traits in others that are also characteristic of ourselves. Jesus also knew this; so, he said we should make sure we've purged ourselves of any flaw we might seek to correct in others. If I act resentful and grouchy, then I have no right to correct someone about not being loving enough towards me.

What he meant was that we should judge others only with great care and that such carefulness begins with self-judgment. I believe any kind of criticism or correction of others should be rare and taken only when necessary to correct sinful or thoughtless behavior and prevent future repercussions on others.

Leviticus 23:1-22; Psalm 106:1-18; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17

Include in your prayers: Sean Simon, Howard Smith, Paul Smith, Allison Spencer, Rob Steiner, Carolyn Tefft, Phil Toren, Mary Ella Turner, Bob Vail, Keith van Cleave, Mary Jean Wampler, Bobbie Weigold, George Whitely, Peter and Mirabelle Wrist, and Bunny Wullschleger.

Saturday, May 4

Matthew 7:13-21 *"Beware of the false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves."* (v.15)

Many of us have witnessed our share of Christian leaders who fell into public disgrace. The Bible warns Christians of the necessity of distinguishing between the true and the false prophets: "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God." (1 John 4:1). The Bible gives three important clues to aid in this discernment. First, does this leader honor Jesus? John goes on to say, "By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God." Talking about Jesus isn't enough, however. Next ask whether this person lives an everyday life that is full of good deeds. Does he or she produce the "fruits of the spirit" Jesus speaks of when he says, "You will know them by their fruits"? Third, what kind of relationships does this leader have with close associates? Do those who know him or her in daily life express love and admiration? Jesus says, "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35).

It may not be our job to expose the false prophets in church leadership positions. We should, however, recognize the signs clearly enough so that we can ignore them and look elsewhere for our leadership.

Leviticus 23:23-44; Psalms 75, 76; 2 Thessalonians 3:1-18

Include in your prayers: Ali, Andie S., Ben, Camilo, Chris K., Clay, Diana, Jacob, Marguerite, Marty, Natalie, Peter, for caregivers and receivers, those in recovery, and St. Raphael's Episcopal Church.

by David Sumner

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