

A Monday Morning Devotional
April 10, 2023

Avery and Marsh wrote a lively song titled *Ev'ry Morning Is Easter Morning*. The words, in these disconnected phrases, describe for me the passion of living with a resurrection faith. Among my favorite lines are these.

*Ev'ry day's resurrection day,
the past is over and gone!*

*I am one of the Easter People!
My new Life has begun!*

*Get it straight from the Easter People:
God's in charge! Spread the word!*

And

*Yesterday I was bored and lonely;
but today look and see!
I belong to the Easter people!
Life's exciting to me!*

Years ago, I spent a week at Ghost Ranch with Avery and Marsh and I can bear witness to their resurrection faith and to the Spirit that inspired them. I saw one being gifted with a tune and simultaneously the other being gifted with corresponding words, Then Dick would find words floating through his consciousness and Donald would pick up the tune on the piano.

It was clear that both men, one the minister of the Word and the other the minister of music, were being inspired at the same time by the same Source. That's resurrection living!

Prayer

Lord, let me respond to your music and live into your Word.



Sharing the Devotional Life

This is my invitation for you to share with me a devotional pilgrimage from Ash Wednesday to Easter. Last year I offered daily devotionals, but now offer weekly devotionals ~ one Monday Morning Devotional for each of the six weeks of Lent ~ each theme being introduced on Sunday, applied in the Monday devotional, and then hopefully self-illustrated by the reflections that each theme inspires during the week. It is a deeply personal journey, yet one that shares the participation of our family of faith. It can be, then, a collective spiritual adventure!

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A Monday Morning Devotional
February 27, 2023

One of the timeless themes of the Bible is God's invitation to all peoples of earth to learn to live with faith in God. In other words, learn to trust the God you cannot see, and then gather all the evidence a lifetime can provide that God is truly with us!

By Abraham's faith walk with God at the beginning of the Bible to the disciples' faith walk with a Risen and Living Lord, we are being encouraged to trust the goodness of God in the land of the living.

Living by faith in God also comes with its corresponding capacity to doubt, teaching us that the choice is ours, each and every day, whether we will live in faith, or in doubt. Faith cannot be saved in reserve until it is needed, but must be claimed daily in order to keep doubt at bay.

There are two perils in faith walking that need to be avoided at all cost: the tendency to live in the past by longing for the way things used to be with God, and living in the future by waiting for God to come in all His glory. Both deny the greatest adventure of all, that God is with us in the present moment!

In this season of lamentation and celebration, I have found that when faith is chosen at the start of every day, there is no room for the doubt that can sabotage everything from self-esteem to sacred purpose.

Prayer

Lord of the journey and of the destination, I thank you for inviting me to walk with you through this amazing day you prepared for me. May our friendship grow strong in the experiences we share today.

A Monday Morning Devotional
April 3, 2023

Welcome to Holy Week ~ a week in which God celebrates victory over defeat, and a week in which we remember the inhumanity we once inflicted upon God ~ and often still inflict. It is truly a week in which the lamentations of earth move together with the celebrations of heaven!

Palm Sunday was God's coronation ritual for the King of kings. The meal in the upper room was the Passover Celebration of God's liberating authority over the oppressive powers of earth. And Easter morning was God's celebration of a victory beyond anything earth had ever imagined.

Meanwhile, in the shadows of Holy Week, loyalties were tested, evil became arrogant, hypocrisy was revealed, and the judgment of God was declared ~ from a cross that was meant to be a sign of defeat but would forever be treasured as a symbol of our salvation.

We have an expression about *snatching victory from the jaws of defeat*, and the definition of that phrase describes God's strategy for Easter: *To suddenly win a contest when it appears that loss is a foregone conclusion, to succeed in an endeavor through reversal of fortune, skill, effort or good judgment.*

In life, as in this season of lamentation and celebration, I have found that Easter reveals God's favorite strategy for dealing with us, often enabling us to experience God-sized victories in the midst of human-sized disappointments and failures.

Prayer

God of all my ups and downs, thank you for believing in me when I fail, and for claiming victory even when I lose.

A Monday Morning Devotional
March 27, 2023

When it comes to responsible time management, there is a place to put off until tomorrow a task that demands attention today. It is a skill we learn in hindsight when we realize that we wasted too much time fretting about things that didn't matter and not enough time considering things of greatest value.

Having said that, however, it is equally important to realize that when that practice becomes habitual, it is procrastination: the habit of postponing important tasks for fear of failure, fear of success, fear of criticism, or fear of confrontation. The list of fears is endless, but procrastination stands in stark contrast to the spiritual initiative of perseverance!

Perseverance is the art of allowing God to set the goal, to establish the vision, and then persistently moving toward it by letting the vision be our guide and not be sidetracked by the distractions along the way. When we do that, even against what seem like overwhelming odds, we can sometimes sense, not only the direction, but also the momentum of the divine purpose.

I have also found that perseverance in life contributes energy and resilience of patience. My experiences of divine purpose are derived from what I know of God's patience with me and God's pervasive determination to accomplish certain life tasks together.

In this season of lamentation and celebration, we do well to discover what things the Lord intends to accomplish with us in the future, and then to focus on what is required of us in the present moment.

Prayer

Lord, help! Not in someone tomorrow, but here and now!

A Monday Morning Devotional
March 6, 2023

When it comes to the contrasting virtues of hope and despair, we often wonder ~ if only in the quiet places of the mind ~ why we cannot have one without the other. Truth be told, each one helps us to measure the other. Do we not explain our despair as the loss of hope, and experience hope as the absence of despair?

What makes this choice fascinating to me is that it is made daily, not in the mind ~ as in intellectual commitment, or in the heart ~ as in emotional preference, but by the spirit. Evidence abounds that even when the mind has lost its confidence and the heart its passion, the human spirit is able to rise up and restore hope ~ even to a fading life.

That evidence is most dramatic in healthcare situations when doctors have determined that a life is shutting down only to discover that the spirit is yet unwilling to surrender! Yet, as dramatic as those moments are in the last season of life, they are dramatic throughout life, for the human spirit somehow knows why it's here and what it yet longs to accomplish.

In this season of lamentation and celebration, we do well to remember that this journey between birth and death is a spiritual adventure, and the spirit is able to respond to the encouragement of God in ways that outperform the ravages of life caused by despair.

Prayer

Lord of the ordinary and of the extraordinary, I marvel at the resilience of your ways with me, and confess that all too often I surrender to despair. May my spirit respond to your spiritual encouragement today and every day.

A Monday Morning Devotional
March 13, 2023

The opposite of love, as God defines love, is not hate but indifference. God's love is the very spirit of solidarity that holds community together, and in its most lethal form, it is the complete indifference to others that tears apart the spiritual fabric of civilization.

In parable after parable, Jesus calls our attention to the way the spiritual fabric of human life is torn asunder by the self-centeredness that turns a blind eye to the lives of others. From the story of the rich man and Lazarus to the way he chose to minister to the outcast and abandoned, he encourages us to see the way the absence of love destroys the experience of community, and how only love holds it together and enables it to mature.

Have we not found it so ~ that when we choose to live in private personal space that we are eventually diminished by the sustaining influence of others? And when we invest ourselves in community we experience a wholeness that we cannot attain on our own.

According to John's Gospel, the life of Christ was, and always will be, a gift of divine love to a world that grows indifferent to the influence of God.

In this season of lamentation and celebration, may we feel the Lord's call to live beyond our isolation, and to live more fully into the spiritual dynamic of the Christ-centered life.

Prayer

Lord, let me live this day your way, and not my way!

A Monday Morning Devotional
March 20, 2023

We used to share common definitions of the words *patience* and *impatience*; but those definitions are quickly distorted by what I experience as a generational sense of urgency that undermines our confidence in the unfolding patterns of sacred purpose.

In theological terms we used to call it *apocalyptic thinking*, the way we imagined some final judgment of God. Today, so many social crusades, from the environment, to social and political causes, to healthcare issues, all present themselves with a sense of urgency almost as to suggest that the world will end tomorrow if something drastic is not done yesterday!

Whenever I detect that someone, claiming to be the source of truth, is announcing the apocalypse, my spirit sends up red flags to my heart and mind ~ the warning that someone other than God is claiming to know what I must do to be obedient to some anonymous authority.

Patience enables us to enjoy life in the moment, while the urgency that is impatience desecrates the stillness of the moment that is absolutely essential for both devotion and discernment. And I have found in ministry that among those entrusted to my care, it is the missed opportunities of precious moments that cause remorse, not the misdeeds of all their yesterdays.

In this season of lamentation and celebration, let us take time to enjoy the moment, and not be so willingly led to outpace what may be the unfolding purpose of God.

Prayer

Slow me down, Lord, so that I may be in with you!