

Good News Daily

Volume XXII

July 31-August 6, 2022

Number 31

Sunday, July 31

Mark 3:20-30 *“But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; he is guilty of an eternal sin.”* (v.29 NIV)

The Pharisees and teachers of the law could not deny the reality of Jesus’ miracles nor the supernatural power by which they were performed. They refused to believe that the power came from God because, to do so, they would have to acknowledge him as Messiah. Their pride would not let them do that, so they accused Jesus of getting his power from Satan. Jesus, by his logic, easily shows the absurdity of that accusation.

Then comes the statement by Jesus, quoted above, that causes confusion and fear among some Christians. They wonder what the “sin against the Holy Spirit” is, and whether they have committed it.

Christians need not worry about this sin in their own lives, because it is attributing to Satan that which is the work of the Holy Spirit. It reveals a heart-attitude of unbelief and unrepentance. Intentional, continuing rejection of the work of the Holy Spirit is blasphemy because it is rejecting God Himself. The religious leaders accused Jesus of blasphemy, but they were to ones who were guilty. Despite all the evidence to the contrary, for their own selfish purposes, they attributed Jesus’ gracious acts to Satan.

Judges 6:1-24; Psalms 93, 96; 2 Corinthians 9:6-15

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 those now in danger and any continuing to struggle, including Cameron Fraser; 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; and for Todd and Patsy McGregor and their work with SAMS training missionaries.

Monday, August 1

John 1:1-18 *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”* (v.1)

In a group studying prayer recently, one of the members came up to the leader after the session. “My grandson is in a Christian school and says he reads the Bible,” she said. “But he says that there is only one God, and he can’t see how Jesus can be God also.”

A classic remedy for this situation is to ask the person who has the question to read our Gospel lesson for today. Jesus was with God, and was God, from the beginning. While he was on earth, his knowledge of things that related to anything other than his mission seems to have been limited to what was known by people of his age. But he was and is God, a Person of the Trinity, along with the Father and the Holy Spirit. If a person who believes the Bible reads today’s passage, that person is faced with the inescapable conclusion that Jesus is God.

A question that, in many cases, immediately arises afterwards is, “Well, how can I understand the Trinity; how can three people be one?” It is perhaps impossible to explain the Trinity clearly to another; it is largely a mystery and a matter of faith. But a helpful, practical way of getting a person to think about the doctrine of the Trinity is to compare it with water which can be in vapor form (as fog), in frozen form (as ice), or in its liquid form as we most often see it.

Judges 6:25-40; Psalm 80; Acts 2:37-47

Include in your prayers: Ricardo Acuña, Yolanda Aguilar, Rick Anderson, Kay Bailey, Liz Bardin, Susan Bardin and her family, Wally Bates, Ray Browne, Angie Bruer, Helen Bruner, Bill Buttner, Linton and Gloria Chung, Jenne ClenDening, and Judy Collins and her family.

Tuesday, August 2

John 1:19-28 *“I am the voice of one calling in the desert, ‘Make straight the way for the Lord.’”* (v.23)

Concerning faith in Jesus Christ, don’t you sometimes feel like someone crying in the desert? I do. With all of the violence and other ungodly behavior around us, we wonder what the world is coming to. And, when we turn on our television sets or go to a motion picture, we can see where some of this influence is coming from.

And, if all of that is not bewildering enough, we find that, religiously speaking, we are in a post-Christian era in a pluralistic society. That simply means that Christian standards aren’t taken seriously anymore, and that there are

multiple religious viewpoints whirling around us. Being serious about our faith almost seems to be the only thing that is “politically incorrect” in our day.

The solution: rejoice and be glad in it. God is giving us great opportunities! He is awakening us from our complacency. He will allow things to get bad enough that we, too, are motivated to cry out as John the Baptist did. Because, each day, every day, God wants us to be making a pathway for Jesus to enter the hearts of people the world over, and especially in our own neighborhood.

Judges 7:1-18; Psalm 78:1-39; Acts 3:1-11

Include in your prayers: Shirley Connell, Robert Connell, Ray Constable, Connie D’Alessandro and her family, Aidan Davis, Dave and Marion Downing, Fran Ford, and Charlie Gasperino.

Wednesday, August 3

John 1:29-42 *“The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, ‘We have found the Messiah.’”* (v.41)

Let’s talk about Andrew. Do you ever wonder about him? Here he is, the one who apparently led Simon Peter to Jesus, and yet he does not end up being one of the three members of Jesus’ “inner circle” of Peter, James, and John. I often wonder if Andrew felt excluded or if there was some other reason that he didn’t have the intimate connection with Jesus that the other three had.

Andrew was obviously an evangelist. He not only went to his brother to witness about Jesus, but, when some Greeks came seeking Jesus, it is to Andrew that Philip takes them, and Andrew then introduces them to Jesus. Thus, he is regarded as both the first home missionary and the first foreign missionary in the Christian faith.

God gives each of us gifts for ministry. Andrew’s gifts were different from those of Peter, James, and John. That did not make him any less a disciple or any less a Christian. We need to remember that so that we won’t compare the way Jesus uses us with the way other people serve (perhaps in more prominent capacities). Maybe Andrew was just too busy bringing people to Jesus to be included in the inner circle.

Judges 7:19—8:12; Psalm 119:97-120; Acts 3:12-26

Include in your prayers: Hank Hawken, Pam Heatley, Tom Henry, Sally Honeyman, Mary Imle, Cindy Islip, Arlene Joseph and her daughter, Jacqui Kapinowski, Kristian Joseph Lawler, Jeff LeFevre, and Elaine Mariggio.

Thursday, August 4

John 1:43-51 *“Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?” Nathanael asked.* (v.46)

Today’s Gospel lesson continues with Jesus calling the disciples. These were clearly just ordinary men. By modern standards, they would have been regarded as a very mediocre group, perhaps even a bunch of failures. Perhaps you have seen the humorous report from the Jordan Management Consultants—the way that a modern business consultant might have seen these men. “Simon Peter is emotionally unstable and given to fits of temper. Andrew has absolutely no qualities of leadership. The two brothers, James and John, place personal interest above company loyalty. Thomas demonstrates a questioning attitude that would tend to undermine morale.” The report concludes that Judas Iscariot seems bright, resourceful, has a keen business mind and contacts in high places; the consultant recommends that he be Jesus’ controller and right-hand man.

We should take comfort in the fact that Jesus relied on ordinary people to bring his message to the world. No one can contend that it was through brilliance or eloquence of speech that people have been won over to Christ. It also proves that God can use us, regardless of how untalented we may think ourselves to be. And no one else can live out the particular plan that God has for you but you.

Judges 8:22-35; Psalm 145; Acts 4:1-12

Include in your prayers: Bob Montheard and Pam DeFelice, Darcy Munoz, Roman Munoz, Peter Pawlikowski, Carol Ann Peterson, Jim and Jerre Rannie, Carolyn Reilcenis, Bonnie and David Selvig, Sally and the Thomas family.

Friday, August 5

John 2:1-12 *“This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee.”* (v.11)

A lot of people have trouble with miracles. Many scholars downplay the miracles in the Bible. There are theologians who believe the miracles Jesus and his disciples performed, but think that, once we had the Bible, miracles quit happening. Others take John 14:12 (“Anyone who has faith in me...will do even greater things than these....”) to mean that people in our day will perform more miracles than Jesus did.

One thing about miracles that happen in our day—there is almost always a logical way that they can either be explained or explained away. If there has been a miraculous healing, for instance, there can always be the explanation that it must have been a wrong diagnosis in the first place. Where eyes of faith see a miracle, eyes of doubt see nothing unusual.

I was fascinated years ago by this explanation of miracles. They are just instances of God, who has control of time, speeding up the process. For instance, a seed is put into the ground; and, with water and time, that seed becomes a vine that produces grapes. Those grapes can then be squeezed, and the juice put aside to ferment into wine. In our reading for today, Jesus just speeded up that process! What miracles has God shown you?

Judges 9:1-16, 19-21; Psalm 88; Acts 4:13-31

Include in your prayers: Howard Smith, Allison Spencer, Rob Steiner, Roger Thomas, Phil Toren, Keith van Cleave, Dianne Warley, Wendy Williams, Joyce Wright, Peter and Mirabelle Wrist, and Bunny Wullschleger

Saturday, August 6

John 2:13-25 *“How dare you turn my Father’s house into a market!”* (v.16)

Jesus cleanses the temple early in John’s Gospel. In Mark, this incident happens much later, and there Jesus says (quoting from Isaiah), “My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations” (11:17). That, really, is the issue. Should a house of worship, a house of prayer, be treated as a commercial marketplace?

There are many uses for church buildings nowadays, and it is refreshing to see these facilities being utilized for worthwhile purposes all week long rather than being occupied only on Sundays and other special occasions. But, it is important to remember that these are facilities consecrated for God’s use. When churches have fashion shows, for instance, that use of the facilities might be questioned.

Our churches, on the other hand, should not only be houses of prayer, but centers of prayer. In addition to the prayers of worship, there should be opportunities for people to learn about prayer through various courses on the subject made available to them. There should be prayer groups and prayer events (retreats, quiet days, prayer vigils, etc.). And there should be prayer ministries within and issuing forth from the congregation. Such activities in the temple would have warmed Jesus’ heart rather than incurring his anger.

Judges 9:22-25, 50-57; Psalms 87, 90; Acts 4:32—5:11

Include in your prayers: Beth, Clay, Debbie, JoAnn, John, Marguerite, Marty, and Peggy.

by Harry Griffith

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