

Good News Daily

May 19–24, 2008

pious and eliminating those who are not. Jesus, however, calls forth a righteousness that is not about outward acts of piety but an inward righteousness, which comes from complete submission to the Father. In these passages, Jesus' acts of goodness to feed the disciples and to heal the man with the withered hand more completely fulfill the intentions of the law, not just the behaviors of the law.

Beloved, are there ways that you are more concerned with outward actions of piety than with the inward motivations of your heart? It is so easy in our world to get swept up in what others think of us, particularly here in the Church. We wrongly believe that God will like us better if we are more "pious" in our actions and that God will like us less if we "sin" or are not good enough. Beloved, God is more concerned with the state of your heart than he is with your actions. Good, righteous acts are important to God; but as with Jesus, from a surrendered heart that trusts God and is seeking to know Him, righteous actions will flow.

Proverbs 8:1-21; Psalms 16, 17; 2 John 1-13

Saturday, May 24

Pray for your pastors' purity.

Pure motives.

Pure thought-life and faithfulness to their spouses.

Birthdays

Dale Worsham

Matthew 12:15-21 *"Here is my servant, whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles....And in his name the Gentiles will hope"* (vv.18, 21)

Praise the Lord that He succeeds in His plans, even when we do not cooperate. It was always God's intention in choosing the people of Israel as His chosen ones, that they would bring light to the Gentile peoples. In His original covenant with Abraham, God proclaimed that Abraham would be a blessing to the nations. But as Israel got more and more distracted from following the LORD, they also neglected their mission of bringing light to the nations. Israel chose to go her own way. She thought that she knew better how to be "successful in life" than the Lord and His plans for her. Praise the Lord that He did not forget us, and that He brought forth the fulfillment of His plans through Jesus Christ, the one in whose name the Gentiles will hope. Are there places in your life where the Lord has instructed you in His ways, and you are pursuing your own ways? Beloved, you can believe that the Lord will bring about His plans. The question is, will you go willingly or must He go around you in order to bring those plans about? Trust the Lord, and trust His plans for your life!

Proverbs 8:22-36; Psalms 20, 21; 3 John 1-15

by Kim Koi

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Monday, May 19

Pray for your pastors' families.

God's peace and protection.

A growing love relationship with their spouses.

A commitment to quality and quantity time together.

Birthdays

Laura Barowski, Yvonne Speer, Harry Titus

Matthew 11:1-6 *When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?" Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see."* (vv.2-4)

Why does John doubt? Isn't this the John who proclaimed Jesus the Lamb of God and baptized him? Why does he now doubt Jesus' identity? As I have studied, this passage has been made clear—Jesus is not behaving as John expected. The Old Testament depicts a Messiah who judges and condemns the wicked, who brings righteous order to the world, who finally frees Israel from her captivity. But, in Jesus, God came in mercy, not in judgment. The judgment will come. We saw it yesterday in the passage from Revelation. But we are in a season of grace—a time when "the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them" (v.5). This is the Kingdom of God on earth.

If someone were to look at your life, would they know that you are a Christian? I don't mean the kind who never sins and who goes to church regularly. Would they see the Kingdom actions that we see in Jesus' life—that the blind see, the lame are healed, the poor hear the good news. Would they know that you are about the Kingdom of God?

Lord, transform us into your reflection. As you came to earth and showed yourself as God, may people also see you in us. May they see your Kingdom work in our lives.

Proverbs 3:11-20; Psalms 1, 2, 3; 1 John 3:18—4:6

Tuesday, May 20

Pray for wisdom for your pastors.

The mind of Christ.

Godly decision-making.

Understanding of biblical truth.

Birthdays

Jennifer Clark and Atticus Gonzalez

Anniversaries

Jose & Lisa Moreno, Roger & Margaret White

1 John 4:7-21 *We love because he first loved us. Those who say, "I love God," and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.* (vv.19-21)

At times the teachings of Jesus are hard. The past couple of weeks, a friend and I have had some conflict. I feel as if I cannot say anything right, and I have been very angry with her. I felt justified in my anger because she was being unreasonable; so I held onto it. And it has grown until there is a bitterness and, dare I say, a hatred toward her in my heart. But I hear the commands of Jesus to forgive if I want to be forgiven, and the verse above that says that unless I love my sister, I cannot love God. This is a hard teaching to swallow.

Yesterday, I repented from my unforgiveness and I chose to forgive. It was a choice. I did not feel like forgiving her. I did not want to forgive her. I wanted to hang onto my anger and my bitterness because I felt justified in it. But Scripture does not say to forgive your sister when you want to, or when you feel like it. It just says to forgive. And forgiveness is an act of the will. It is a choice to release anger, to release bitterness, to release that person from having to "make it up to you." Immediately after forgiving (and asking the Lord to forgive me for my sin against Him in holding onto unforgiveness), I felt no different. But within an hour, I felt free. Free from anger. Free from bitterness. Free to love!

Proverbs 4:1-27; Psalms 5, 6; Matthew 11:7-15

Wednesday, May 21

Pray for your pastors' ministry focus.

Clear vision.

Commitment to biblical priorities.

Remain true to their God-given gifts and strengths.

Birthday

Kevin Mathis

Psalm 119:1-24 *With my whole heart I seek you; do not let me stray from your commandments. I treasure your word in my heart, so that I may not sin against you. Blessed are you, O LORD, teach me your statutes.* (vv.10-12)

One of my good friends was telling me the other day that she is trying to grow her hair out because her husband really likes it when her hair is longer. To her, it is an act of love to satisfy the desires of her husband's heart. He is not dictating how she should wear her hair; he is not demanding that she grow it out. He told her what was pleasing to him and she wants to please him.

God's Word, and more specifically God's Laws in His Word, are His way of telling us what pleases Him. Very often, we treat God's Laws like they are rules to live our lives by, and we try to do so; but more often, our hearts are rebellious and bitter even if our actions are right. What I love about our readings for today is that obeying God's Laws is not seeking God's approval, but it is an expression of love toward God, our Lover. He has laid out for us what pleases Him, and when we are in right relationship with Him, we long to please Him. So we keep His laws, not to earn His approval, but to seek His pleasure. And, in that, there is great joy! Beloved, why do you keep God's Laws? Are you trying to earn His approval or are you expressing love toward the Lover of your soul?

Proverbs 6:1-19; 1 John 5:1-12; Matthew 11:16-24

Thursday, May 22

Pray for your pastors' health.

Protection of their body and mind.

An extra portion of stamina and strength.

Commitment to stress-releasing activity.

Birthdays

May Joy Umaming and Abby Saunders

Psalm 18:1-20 *The cords of death encompassed me; the torrents of perdition assailed me; the cords of Sheol entangled me; the snares of death confronted me. In my distress, I called upon the LORD; to my God I cried for help....He reached down from on high, he took me; he drew me out of mighty waters.* (vv.4-6a, 16)

The proverb for today tells a story of a young man who is seduced by a "loose woman." She meets him on the street as he is walking by, potentially too close to where she does business, and entices him. She kisses him and tells him of her fragrantly perfumed bed. She says that her husband will never know, that there will not be any consequences to her actions. "With much seductive speech she persuades him" (v.21) and he follows her, "not knowing that it will cost him his life" (v.23). I think that this proverb is speaking literally about the attractions of adultery, but I think that it also has lessons for us in a figurative sense. The book of Hosea presents an allegory where the LORD is played by Hosea and where his prostitute wife represents Israel. In that story, the LORD pursues Israel and she is unfaithful to Him in turning to idols. She "prostitutes" herself to others, giving them her affection and worship instead of the LORD. Beloved, there are ways that we also prostitute ourselves. And the offerings of the idols look good to our eyes, just like the woman's offerings looked good to the young man's eyes in the proverb. We think it is not a big deal, that there will be no consequences, not realizing that they lead us to our death. Beloved, what are the things that you worship instead of, or in addition to, the LORD? Is it wealth? Is it comfort? Is it success? Is it the opinions of others toward you?

Whatever it may be, know that you are not beyond reach. As the Psalmist says, cry out to the LORD when these snares of death entangle you and He will reach down and draw you out of mighty waters!

Proverbs 7:1-27; 1 John 5:13-21; Matthew 11:25-30

Friday, May 23

Pray for your pastor's spiritual growth.

A heart for God and the lost.

Fresh biblical insights.

Personal devotions not related to sermon preparations.

Birthdays

Rosalind Leger and Sabina Varney

Matthew 12:1-14 *"But if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath."* (vv.7-8)

In this Matthew passage, and throughout most of the Gospels, Jesus is at odds with the Pharisees because he is calling forth a deeper righteousness. The Pharisees are a group seeking to bring the Messiah by becoming more