

Good News Daily

Volume XVI

June 5-11, 2016

Number 23

Sunday, June 5

Ecclesiastes 6:1-12 *For who knows what is good for a man in life...Who can tell him what will happen under the sun after he is gone?* (v.12 NIV)

Today's Old Testament lesson reflects on the futility of life, how none of our possessions, accomplishments, or reputations follow us into death. We enter the world with nothing, and leave it the same way. As I write, my family is dealing with the death of my mother, three days ago. It was not unexpected—she had been comatose for a month. We praise God that she no longer suffers, and, as a Christian, is now with Him. We are also reflecting on her 84 years of life, as we pore over old photographs and share various memories. That for the deceased, none of these survive their passing, is a sobering thought. Fortunately, today's gospel reading offers needed encouragement: Our earthly lives *will* come to nothing, but all believers are destined for the King's Banquet in heaven. My mother was always beautifully dressed, yet Jesus calls us to be "dressed and ready *for service*" as we prepare for and await his bringing us home. Just as death's precise moment is unknown, so will be the coming of our Lord. We need to be spiritually well-prepared for *both*.

Psalms 24, 29; Acts 10:9-23; Luke 12:32-40

ANGLICAN CYCLE: PRAY for The Church of the Province of Myanmar (Burma) The Most Revd Stephen Than Myint Oo Archbishop of Myanmar and Bishop of Yangon

DIOCESAN CYCLE: St. Barnabas Episcopal Church, Havana; Kabuhima Parish, Tanzania: Kabuhima; The Anglican Diocese of Arequipa, Peru, The Rt. Rev. Alejandro Mesco, Bishop; Ralph N. McMichael, ordination to the Priesthood.

St. Matthew's: Pray for the mentally ill.

Monday, June 6

Ecclesiastes 7:1-14 *A good name is better than fine perfume, the day of death better than the day of birth. It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting.* (vv.1-2a)

I decided God must have a sense of humor—or irony—for having me work on reflections that included Ecclesiastes, the same week as my mother passed away. "The Teacher," as this book's author is called, held a rather jaded view of life; it had disappointed him many times. He likely thought of death as good because it would bring relief from all his seeking, striving, and dissatisfaction. But for those who believe in Jesus Christ, and have a love relationship with him, death *is* good because it makes it possible for us to be with our Lord in person, eternally. And, as an Anglican, I believe those who die in the Lord are with the saints and angels, "on whose constant intercession we rely." Because heaven is like a great big family reunion, I've been wondering whom Mom is now encountering there.

Yes, today, ours is a "house of mourning," yet we are rejoicing in Christ's resurrection and the promises of God. As the psalmist reminds us, "great is your love, reaching to the heavens, your faithfulness reaches to the skies" (Psalm 57:10).

Psalms 56, 57, 58; Galatians 4:12-20; Matthew 15:21-28

ANGLICAN CYCLE: Cueibet – (Bahr El Ghazal, Sudan) The Rt Revd Elijah Matueny Awet

DIOCESAN CYCLE: St. Andrew's, Edwardsville, consecration of present church building, 1926; Wedding anniversary of The Rev. Canon Elliot and Helen Blackburn, Mason City, IA.

St. Matthew's: Pray for those in need

Tuesday, June 7

Ecclesiastes 8:14—9:10 *Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the grave, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom.* (v.10)

Carpe Diem! “Seize the day!” says the Teacher. Or, as Fr. John Wesley put it: “Do all the good you can. By all the means you can. In all the ways you can. In all the places you can. At all the times you can. To all the people you can. As long as ever you can.”

Each of us only gets one turn at life, a single opportunity to repent and believe the gospel, to know and follow Christ, and to do his work here on earth until we meet him in heaven. True, all our works come to an end when we die. But think of all the good we can do for the Lord until that day. However, we can’t do it well, on our own. Today’s psalms bespeak a desperate need for God’s help and comfort, encouraging us to “Trust in him at all times...for God is our refuge” (Psalm 62:8).

Remember, you *can* do “all things through Christ who strengthens you” (see Philippians 4:13). Now, *get going!*

Psalms 61, 62; Galatians 4:21-31; Matthew 15:29-39

ANGLICAN CYCLE Cuernavaca – (Mexico) The Rt Revd Enrique Treviño Cruz

DIOCESAN CYCLE: Lord, renew our spirits, that our work may not be to us a burden but a delight.

St. Matthew’s: Pray for the less fortunate.

Wednesday, June 8

Ecclesiastes 9:11-18 *The quiet words of the wise are more to be heeded than the shouts of a ruler of fools. Wisdom is better than weapons of war.* (vv.17-18a)

The other thing happening as I write these reflections is our nation’s preparation for the 2016 Presidential Election. But at this point—prior to the party primaries—there are so many candidates, speeches, platforms, and positions, it’s all become a noisy blur. I’ve felt so dismayed at the absence of the “quiet words of the wise” which the Teacher praises, I decided to mount a campaign on Facebook for our cat, “Steinway,” for President. This eight-pound ball of fur manages our household of two humans and three cats so well, we always say, “She’s smarter, better looking, and nicer than most people.” The cat has now garnered so many “likes” and devoted followers online, I figure a lot of other folks are fed up, too.

Scripture reminds us that God’s wisdom and peace are always superior to the “shouts of a ruler of fools,” and to the wars nations concoct. So I pray that no matter who sits in the Oval Office, our new Chief Executive will know Christ and govern according to God’s will. (And maybe Steinway Kitty could visit, sometime?)

Psalms 72; Galatians 5:1-15; Matthew 16:1-12

ANGLICAN CYCLE: Curitiba – (Brazil) The Rt Revd Naudal Alves Gomes

DIOCESAN CYCLE: Arnold Hoffman, Glen Carbon, ordination to the Priesthood.

St. Matthew’s: Pray for the church.

Thursday, June 9

Galatians 5:16-24 *So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, and self-control.* (vv.16, 22-23a)

Throughout the Bible, the Person and work of the Holy Spirit appear, from the Creation account in Genesis to the last chapter of Revelation. In today’s lesson from Galatians, Paul reminds us to “live by the Spirit”—meaning, we are to pray constantly to be filled and *re-filled* with God’s Spirit, so that we may show forth His “fruits.” We also see in today’s gospel lesson that it is only by the revelation of the Holy Spirit and his wisdom that Peter can confess the identity of Christ as “Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16). Both Scripture and the church teach that we can only truly understand the Bible with the help and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Likewise, we cannot live as fully-equipped Christians without that same help and inspiration. And all we have to do is *ask!* Jesus promises us in Luke 11:13, “If you

then...know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" Thanks be to God!

Ecclesiastes 11:1-8; Psalms 70, 71; Matthew 16:13-20

ANGLICAN CYCLE: Cuttack – (North India) The Rt Revd Samson Das

DIOCESAN CYCLE: Laurie R. Kellington, ordination to the Diaconate; Wedding anniversary of The Rev. Robert D. and Catherine Harmon, Mt. Vernon.

St. Matthew's: Pray for the congregation.

Friday, June 10

Galatians 5:25—6:10 *Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.* (vv.9-10)

Once more, a theme from earlier in the week resurfaces: Doing all the good we can, while we are still able. Here, Paul emphasizes that we are especially called to do good for our “family of believers,” that is, fellow Christians and church members. That means things like visiting, sending cards, bringing meals when necessary, taking people to the doctor, taking them Home Communion, or more often, just listening quietly while holding someone’s hand with gentle compassion.

In the parish I am blessed to serve as Rector, our congregation practices loving nurture toward one another, as well as a fairly extensive outreach in the small, semi-rural, somewhat impoverished community in which we live. However, there are times when we Christians get “burned-out” on caring for one another, or doing charitable work. Yet today’s reading encourages us not to “give up.” So remember to take care of *yourself* first—as odd as that sounds—so that you can be in shape to do good for others. (That said, I may just go take a “cat nap” along with Steinway Kitty.)

Ecclesiastes 11:9—12:14; Psalm 69; Matthew 16:21-28

ANGLICAN CYCLE: Cyangugu – (Rwanda) The Rt Revd Nathan Amooti Rusengo

DIOCESAN CYCLE: Jeffrey F. Kozuszek, Centralia; Beth H. Maynard, Champaign, ordination to the Priesthood.

St. Matthew's: Pray for the disabled.

Saturday, June 11

Psalms 75 *When the earth and all its people quake, it is I who hold its pillars firm.* (v.3)

Some days, everything seems to be crashing down around us. There’s only bad news in the media; the world’s in a mess; we have personal health crises or financial woes; a pet or family member dies; some hope we held high is now dashed...

Today, an old friend called to offer her condolences on my mother’s passing, and inquire about the recent surgery from which I’m recovering. But as we talked, I learned that my friend’s adult son, a recovering alcoholic, has disappeared! Nearly a month ago, he stepped into the alley for a break from his job, and just *vanished*. His car was still parked, no note was left at home, and police have no leads. Also, her husband’s health is failing; she herself is a stroke survivor; a great-granddaughter is entering into a marriage none of the family supports; and an elderly priest we both love is quite ill. Fortunately, she’s a devout Christian. Her faith is keeping *her* “pillars firm” amidst this personal “quake.” My friend and I covenanted to pray for one another, and I know that comforted each of us greatly.

Numbers 3:1-13; Psalm 76; Galatians 6:11-18; Matthew 17:1-13

ANGLICAN CYCLE: Cyprus and the Gulf – (Jerusalem & Middle East) The Rt Revd Michael Augustine Owen Lewis

DIOCESAN CYCLE: Christine C. Hopkins, Champaign, ordination to the Diaconate; Feast Day, St. Barnabas’, Havana.

St. Matthew's celebrates the anniversary of Tim and Debbie Leighton and the birthday of Janenne Schmidt.

by The Rev. Dr. Nina George-Hacker, FHC

Used with permission from the BIBLE READING FELLOWSHIP
PO Box 380, Winter Park, FL 32790
www.biblereading.org