

Sunday, January 24

Psalm 63 *My soul thirsts for you; my whole body longs for you in this parched and weary land where there is no water.* (v.1b NLT)

King David composed Psalm 63 when he was in the Judean desert, on the run from his traitorous son Absalom, who had stolen the throne. David had been in this wilderness twice before—first as a young shepherd and then later when he was on the run from jealous King Saul. But this time was different. Before, he'd been a peasant or a soldier. Hiding in the desert hadn't been much of a fall. But this time he'd fallen from a high position. He'd lost his people, his power, and been betrayed by his beloved son.

All of us have ended up stuck in the desert, and sometimes we've fallen from a powerful and comfortable position. Sometimes, like David, that fall can be public and brutal. But no matter how it happens, we should, like David, turn our eyes to God. He alone can provide the living water to restore our parched and weary souls.

Genesis 13:2-18, Galatians 2:1-10; Mark 7:31-37

ANGLICAN CYCLE: PRAY for the Episcopal Anglica Church of Brazil [The Most Rev Francisco De Assis Da Silva](#) Primate of Brazil & Bishop of South-Western Brazil

DIOCESAN CYCLE: St. Barnabas Episcopal Church, Havana; Ilalwansimba Parish: Rev. Joel Kahindi, Tabora, Tanzania; The Mission of St John the Evangelist, San Juan de Miraflores, Peru, The Rev. Luis Villalobos, Priest in Charge; Pray for Christian Unity.

ST. MATTHEW'S: Birthday of Alicia Perry

Monday, January 25

John 4:43-54 *When [the nobleman] heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he went and begged Jesus to come to Capernaum to heal his son, who was about to die. Jesus asked, "Will you never believe in me unless you see miraculous signs and wonders?"* (vv.47-48)

This story has always bothered me. A nobleman asks Jesus, the gracious miracle worker, to heal his dying son. That seems like a reasonable request. But instead of saying, "You bet," Jesus berates the man for not believing in him unless he sees signs and wonders. This isn't exactly the compassionate Savior I've come to know and love. So what's up?

Well, as usual, Christ sees into our hearts, and the heart of this man was more concerned with his pride than his son. He asks Jesus to come down to Capernaum—already telling the Savior how to heal his son. It's possible this nobleman wanted a bit of a show: to have the Lord perform some razzle-dazzle over his boy so he could tell all his friends. Jesus even implies that the man's faith depended on whether Christ "correctly" answered his request.

Does your faith depend on Christ answering your requests "correctly"? Is your belief dependent on Jesus doing "X, Y, or Z"? If so, read this scene in the Bible, and ask Christ to reveal the depth of his love and compassion for you. John writes that the man "believed the word that Jesus spoke." The nobleman's son was saved. So was he.

Genesis 14:1-24; Psalms 41, 52; Hebrews 8:1-13

ANGLICAN CYCLE:

DIOCESAN CYCLE: Patronal Feast of St. Paul's Alton; St. Paul's, Carlinville; St. Paul's,

Pekin; The Cathedral Church of St. Paul, Springfield; Ordination to the Priesthood, Virginia L. Bennett, St. Charles, MO.
ST. MATTHEW'S: Birthdays of Megan Holderby and Philip Brooks.

Tuesday, January 26

John 5:1-18 *When Jesus saw him and knew he had been ill for a long time, he asked him, "Would you like to get well?" "I can't, sir," the sick man said, "for I have no one to put me into the pool when the water bubbles up. Someone else always gets there ahead of me." (vv.6-7)*

This is one of the parts of the Bible that makes me laugh out loud. Jesus has come to this desperate cripple at the pool of Bethesda and asks him if he wants to be well. But instead of a simple, "Yes please, Lord," this man starts complaining about his mean and nasty fellow invalids. I can almost imagine Jesus rolling his eyes when he hears this.

Still, I've been the "Bethesda guy" more times than I care to admit. Instead of being glad and grateful for God's blessing, I start grumbling. Granted, grumblings can have good reason—the man in Bethesda had been crippled for thirty-eight years. I'm not discounting that magnitude of pain and suffering. What I am saying is that by focusing on past wrongs we can completely miss out on Christ's healing. Fortunately, Jesus loves us in spite of our grumbling. The very next thing he says to "Bethesda guy" is "Rise, take up your bed and walk."

Genesis 15:1-11, 17-21; Psalm 45; Hebrews 9:1-14

ANGLICAN CYCLE: Amazon – (Brazil) The Rt Rev Saulo Mauricio de Barros.

DIOCESAN CYCLE: Birthday of The Rev. Sean D. Ferrell, Champaign. Wedding anniversary of The Rt. Rev. Edward L. and Louise Salmon, St. Louis, MO.

ST. MATTHEW'S: Grant that we may run without stumbling to obtain your heavenly promises.

Wednesday, January 27

Psalm 119:49-72 *Arrogant people smear me with lies, but in truth I obey your commandments with all my heart. Their hearts are dull and stupid, but I delight in your instructions. (vv.69-70)*

The Old Testament writers were deliciously blunt. Modern versions have cleaned up the text, which is a shame because it is wonderful. Take, for example, the phrase in Psalm 119:70. Current translations say that 'arrogant people' (i.e. those who delight in their own virtues rather than in God's grace) have hearts that are "dull and stupid." The King James Version is more descriptive: "Their heart is as fat as grease." However, the most accurate translation reads, "they are as dull and senseless as a bucket of lard."

I'm sure you can think of a few "lard buckets" in your life. I'm sure you can also think of times that you've *been* the "lard bucket" (I certainly can). But the thing that strikes me the most is this reminder that our mighty God, who created the universe and conquers nations, is just as concerned about the struggles of the average guy facing arrogant jerks. Our Father is with us every day, every hour, and every second. Take all your problems to Him, big or small. He cares about everything that happens to you.

Genesis 16:1-14; Hebrews 9:15-28; John 5:19-29

ANGLICAN CYCLE: [The Most Rev Dr Eliud Wabukala](#) Primate and Archbishop of All Kenya; All Saints Cathedral Diocese – Garissa Missionary Area [The Rt Revd David Mutisya](#); [The Rt Rev Cleti Ogeto](#), Suffragan Bishop

DIOCESAN CYCLE: Trinity Church, Mattoon, Admitted to the Diocese, 1908.

ST. MATTHEW'S: Birthday of Wayne Dean.

Thursday, January 28

Hebrews 10:1-10 *The old system under the law of Moses was only a shadow, a dim preview of the good things to come, not the good things themselves.* (v.1a)

If you are like me, about this time of year you're saying, "Why, oh why, did I make all those New Year's resolutions?"

I make my resolutions with care. They are meant to improve my life, and I have every good intention of keeping them. But I rarely do. Somewhere around the middle of January, I go back to my old low-exercise, high-sugar way of living. There are those rare occasions where I make it all the way to mid-February. But eventually, I fail.

Many people view Moses' laws in the same way—something that is meant to improve you, but at the cost of giving up all the high-sugar fun associated with life. But as the author of Hebrews points out, the laws are not that at all. Attempting to follow them isn't a "good thing" because God wants us to be miserable; it's a good thing because following them brings us closer to the Lord. Jesus is about relationships, not rules. And relationships are living things, not lists of things.

So next year, I'm making just two resolutions: To love the Lord God with all my heart, and to love my neighbor as myself.

Genesis 16:15—17:14; Psalm 50; John 5:30-47

ANGLICAN CYCLE: Amichi – (Niger, Nigeria) [The Rt Rev Ephraim Ikeakor](#)

DIOCESAN CYCLE: Birthday of The Very Rev. Gus L. Franklin, Springfield, and Carla, widow of The Rev Canon Dr William N. Malottke, Carol Stream.

ST. MATTHEW'S: Birthday of Rachael Kimmerling

Friday, January 29

Psalm 40 *I waited patiently for the Lord to help me, and he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the pit of despair, out of the mud and the mire. He set my feet on solid ground and steadied me as I walked along.* (vv.1-2)

At the Glennon House Healing Ministry, the illness we encounter most is the disease of despair. More than job loss, illness, or even grief, despair is the deadliest sickness because it robs you of hope, and hope is as necessary to life as breathing.

King David was no stranger to despair. He knew it was a pit filled with mud and mire (or, more descriptively, "miry clay"). It could suck you down and kill you. But in Psalm 40, David gives us practical steps to get out of despair. Cry out to God. Trust in His promises. And, perhaps the most difficult step of all, be patient.

When you're stuck in a slimy, horrible pit, it's hard to believe that God will save you. It's especially hard if you've been in this particular pit for ages. But don't give up. Cry out to the Lord. Trust in His promises. Be patient. God will lift you out of the pit of despair, just as he lifted King David, and set your feet once more on solid ground.

Genesis 17:15-27; Psalm 54; Hebrews 10:11-25; John 6:1-15

ANGLICAN CYCLE: [The Most Rev Pradeep Samantaroy](#) Moderator of CNI & Bishop of Amritsar; Andaman & Car Nicobar Islands – [The Rt Rev Christopher Paul](#).

DIOCESAN CYCLE: Trinity Church, Lincoln, Anniversary of the Consecration of Church building, 1921.

ST. MATTHEW'S: Pour upon us the abundance of your mercy.

Saturday, January 30

Genesis 18:1-16 *So she laughed silently to herself and said, "How could a worn-out woman like*

me enjoy such pleasure, especially when my master—my husband—is also so old?” Then the Lord said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh? Why did she say, ‘Can an old woman like me have a baby?’ Is anything too hard for the Lord? I will return about this time next year, and Sarah will have a son.” (vv.12-14)

One of the most horrible things I’ve ever heard someone say is, “You’re not cured because you don’t have enough faith.” As if there is some sort of spiritual gas gauge, where if you reach three-quarters full you’ll be blessed. This is particularly cruel when someone is suffering. Not only are they in pain, but it’s all their fault?

Sarah had spent so many years hoping for a child that she was out of faith. Her worn-out body could no longer carry a baby. She was so sure of her future that when she heard God say she would have a child, she laughed at Him. Her laugh was internal, but that didn’t stop it from being a flat-out “Lord, you are a complete idiot” guffaw. She did not believe. She did not have faith. And the Lord gave her a child anyway.

Faith means believing that God has a plan for you, even when you don’t understand. You are blessed. You are cherished. Even if you laugh.

Psalm 55; Hebrews 10:26-39; John 6:16-27

ANGLICAN CYCLE: Anglican Parishes of the Central Interior, British Columbia & the Yukon, [The Rt Rev Barbara Jean Andrews](#)

DIOCESAN CYCLE: Birthday of The Rt. Rev. Edward L. Salmon, Jr., St. Louis, MO.

ST. MATTHEW’S: Pray that the Church throughout the world may persevere with steadfast faith.

by Ruth Owen

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