

Sunday, February 5

Mark 10:13-22 *I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.* (v.15 NIV)

Entrance into the kingdom of God is not gained through intellectual pursuit; you cannot “study” your way in. Entrance into the kingdom is not gained through a perfect attendance record at church, nor through a voluminous amount of volunteer service in the cause of Christianity. Entrance into the kingdom is not granted through adherence to the rules of a moral society. Jesus himself made it quite plain that the only way to enter is as a child.

Picture a child in the arms of his loving father and you will see love, trust, admiration, and faith in the one who holds him. The child knows that he is loved and will always be protected and nurtured. He trusts and believes everything his father tells him because he knows his father cannot tell a lie. Because he loves his father and is confident of the father’s love for him, the desire of his heart is to obey his father and do what is pleasing to him.

Come to the Father with no credentials other than love, trust, and faith.

Genesis 24:50-67; Psalms 93, 96; 2 Timothy 2:14-21

Monday, February 6

Hebrews 13:1-16 *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.* (v.8)

It is a comfort to have a friend that you always know you can count on because, for as long as you’ve known each other, that friend has been consistently kind, patient, loving, and faithful. There is a lot to be said for consistency. You don’t have to worry about that friend betraying you or giving up on you if you have made some huge blunder or mistake, because in your heart you know your friend will always love you, come what may.

It is a rare treasure to have such a friend, and if you think that there is no one like this in your life right now, then you have forgotten *the* best friend you could ever have: *Jesus!* He is never-changing in his love for us and his desire for our companionship. His character and characteristics have been the same since before the creation of the world. He stands with outstretched arms to welcome us back when we have

wandered away as prodigal sons and daughters. His patience and forgiveness are inexhaustible.

Thank you, Lord Jesus, that we can always count on you.

Genesis 25:19-34; Psalm 80; John 7:37-52

Tuesday, February 7

Hebrews 13:17-25 *May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory fo ever and ever. Amen.* (vv.20-21)

These words are a beautiful concluding prayer in this epistle to the Hebrews, and I find these two verses to be extremely rich. There is an abundance of deep, spiritual truth about Jesus in these verses, as well as some practical application.

I invite you to be blessed—as I have been—by reading this prayer over again, slowly and thoughtfully. In place of the words “you” and “us,” substitute “me.”

Ponder the greatness of the Lord.

Genesis 26:1-6, 12-33; Psalm 78:1-39; John 7:53—8:11

Wednesday, February 8

John 8:12-20 *When Jesus spoke again to the people he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”* (v.12)

There is a universal, common understanding of the difference between light and darkness. (The exception might be a person who has been blind from birth.) Even a newborn child seems to comprehend light and darkness on the purely physical level. But on a spiritual level these concepts become associated with good and evil, Jesus and the Devil. Jesus states here that he is the Light, and in the first chapter of John we are told that Jesus is the Word, and in him is life that is “the light of men” (vv.1-4). In today’s psalm reading, verse 105 says, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”

What a wonderful promise we are given in all these references to Jesus as light, summed up in John 8:12, “Whoever follows me will never

walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” I walked, or should I say stumbled, through life in the darkness until my eyes were opened to the great truth that Jesus is the life-giving light for my path. Sometimes I stop focusing on the Light and wander into the darkness. I fall down but Jesus picks me up and sets me back on his path.

Thank you, Lord Jesus, for your life-giving light, your compassion, and your mercy.

Genesis 27:1-29; Psalm 119:97-120; Romans 12:1-8

Thursday, February 9

Romans 12:9-21 *Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.* (v.12)

When we read God’s word and it gives us instructions that may seem like more than we are capable of following, it is helpful to remember that God never asks us to do anything that He cannot empower us to do. All we have to do is ask for the help of His Holy Spirit, and it is ours. Being able to comply with Paul’s imperatives in this letter to the Romans is not something I can do on my own; I *absolutely* need the Lord’s help.

If I start by being faithful in prayer, God will give me joy as I hope in him and the patience to endure whatever affliction comes my way. But, I must be “faithful” in prayer, and that means being diligent, persistent, and hopeful. As my faith grows, so does my confidence in God’s Word.

The last verse of this passage tell us, “Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good.” Again, this is only possible by the power of the Holy Spirit working in our hearts and minds, because our natural, sinful self wants to “hit back” or to get revenge. That choice, of course, simply leads to more problems. God’s way is always best. I have lived long enough to see that.

After all, love wins.

Genesis 27:30-45; Psalms 83, 146, 147; John 8:21-32

Friday, February 10

Romans 13:1-14 *Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another.* (v.8)

This verse gives us an insight as to how serious God is about wanting us to love each other. It is pictured as something we can never stop doing! If it is continuing and it is something we owe, then it is indeed a lifelong obligation. Other debts are expected to be paid up, but not this one. The first time I thought seriously about the meaning of this verse, I asked myself how love could be thought of as a debt. I did not have a satisfactory answer, but my NIV Life Application Bible gave a wonderful answer in the footnote to this verse that I will quote: “We are permanently in debt to Christ for the lavish love he has poured out on us. The only way we can even begin to repay this debt is by loving others in turn. Because Christ’s love will always be infinitely greater than ours, we will always have the obligation to love our neighbors.”

Love is what God cares most about, I think. “God is love” (1 John 4:8, 16). “No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us” (1 John 4:12). “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16). For more on love, take a few minutes and read the 13th chapter of 1 Corinthians. You will be blessed.

Genesis 27:46—28:4, 10-22; Psalm 88; John 8:33-47

Saturday, February 11

Psalm 90 *Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.* (v.12)

When I was a young adult I never gave any thought to how long my life would be. Even when my father died at age 70, or when my mother died at age 78, I never really focused on my own lifespan. However, I did assume that because I was living a much healthier lifestyle than either of my parents had, I likely would live longer than either of them.

But I now believe that more important than the length of our life or even the healthiness of our lifestyle, is the quality of our spiritual life, which affects how we live in relationship to the Lord and to others. The psalmist’s plea in this verse is for God to teach us to make the most of *however* many days we have on earth, teaching us to live in righteousness so that our hearts will become wise.

Oh Lord, please guide me to make right choices, and create in me a pure heart, one full of love and wisdom, kindness and gentleness.

Whether I have one day or hundreds of days left on earth, please help me to live for You. Thank You, gracious Lord.

Genesis 29:1-20; Psalm 87; Romans 14:1-23; John 8:47-59

by Anna Cash

Sunday, February 12

Mark 10:23-31 *Peter said to him, “We have left everything to follow you!”* (v.28, NIV)

Eight years ago I spoke these words of Peter to God with bittersweet joy. We were getting ready to leave for the seminary where my husband became a priest. I left a wonderful job, friends who'd become family, a beautiful home, and a ministry to children with life-threatening illnesses that we loved. It was tough to let go, but we were certain of God's leading and said “yes” without looking back.

As I reflect on this same passage years later, it occurs to me that we're always leaving something behind when we say “yes” to God. The life of faith is a journey of surrender, of letting go; it must be lived with open hearts to discern God's will and open hands to receive the blessings that follow. As time goes on, I have become more aware of God's faithfulness in providing for us. I sense His face shining upon us, and I know Him as a gracious Lord who blesses us with His presence no matter where we go (Psalm 67:1). Thanks be to God!

Genesis 29:20-35; Psalms 66, 67; 1 Timothy 3:14—4:10

Monday, February 13

Psalm 89:1-18 *Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim you, who walk in the light of your presence, O LORD.* (v.15)

Blessed, indeed, are those who have learned to acclaim You, O Lord, for You are their glory and strength (vv.15,17). Since the day that I surrendered to Jesus as my Savior and began to live under his Lordship, I've discovered the transforming power of praise. Before that moment that changed my life, I had never experienced praise in quite the same way.

I recall many moments when I've chosen to praise God during times of fear, apprehension, or anger. I haven't *felt* like praising God, but

I've learned to ignore my feelings and call Him into my situation. Then, it's as if I can see Jesus' hand pulling me up, as when he rescued Peter from sinking into the lake (Matthew 14:29-31). Now, it's become a habit, and the name of Jesus forms on my lips anytime I have a need. Yes, I have fellowship “with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3) through the Holy Spirit every single time I praise God. What a gift!

Genesis 30:1-24; 1 John 1:1-10; John 9:1-17

Tuesday, February 14

Psalm 99 *Exalt the LORD our God and worship at his holy mountain, for the LORD our God is holy.* (v.9)

It is so healthy, wise, uplifting, and good to worship God and exalt His holy name. I distinctly recall worship times when, within minutes of praising God, it's as if I've been transported to a new place full of clarity, wisdom, and light. Worship is a gift that many never open, and they suffer for it. Yet, so many of us are gifted at exalting our problems, letting our imaginations take over, enlarging our problems' scope through anxiety, worry, and fear.

Over and over, the Scriptures call us to trust God and not fear. Matthew 6:27 asks, “Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?” Anxiety and worry are not only a waste of time, they drain us of the energy and zeal we need to become actively engaged in solving our problems.

When we worship God and exalt His name way above our problems, our cares return to their rightful place: submitted unto the God who allows difficulties and fulfills His purpose in all things.

“Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you” (1 Peter 5:7).

Genesis 31:1-24; Psalms 97, 100; 1 John 2:1-11; John 9:18-41

Wednesday, February 15

Psalm 101 *...he whose walk is blameless will minister to me.* (v.6b)

This psalm illustrates the *active* believer beautifully. Our faith is not a passive destination where we arrive, park, and wait. Our faith, if it is real, is firmly founded on a relationship with the living Christ and, like

him, it moves, it does, it is alive. A Christ-like life is evidence of the faith in our hearts.

The psalmist vows to “be careful to lead a blameless life” (v.2). The only way to do that is by being indwelt by the spirit of Jesus himself, the only blameless one. As he ministers to our deepest needs, we are cleansed and empowered to live a genuine life of faith—beginning in our homes (v.2). We choose to guard our eyes (v.3a), to flee from ungodly influences (vv.3b-4, 7), to confront evil (vv.5, 8) and, as we live out our faith, we continue to abide in Jesus, the faithful and blameless one (v.6).

How we live and what we do matters a great deal to God. Every choice moves us closer to Him or farther from Him. “...faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead” (James 2:17).

Genesis 31:25-50; Psalm 109; 1 John 2:12-17; John 10:1-18

Thursday, February 16

1 John 2:18-29 *See that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you.* (v.24a)

Recently, while enjoying a quiet family dinner, our six-year-old suddenly stood and shared that day’s summer camp devotion. Coach Mike had shared his powerful testimony of giving his life over to Christ at a young age. Holding back tears, our daughter searched our faces for evidence that we understood the importance of her words. It was so moving!

I’m always blessed to recognize my children’s faith, and touched by how their faith strengthens ours. Sharing Christ and a love for God’s Word is a gift that returns to you a thousand-fold. We often hear our children apply something they learned at Sunday School, just as Jesus told his disciples would happen. “But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit...will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you” (John 14:26).

Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would teach us *all* things and remind us of his life-giving words. I don’t know about you, but I still have much to learn! I’m so glad the Holy Spirit is my companion, my teacher, and the best counselor anyone could have. Thank You, Lord!

Genesis 32:3-21; Psalm 105:1-22; John 10:19-30

Friday, February 17

John 10:31-42 *And in that place many believed in Jesus.* (v.42)

Do you recall “that place” where you came to believe in Jesus? How glorious it is for me to remember that sweet moment! The seed of Christ’s love had been planted in my heart through years of worship and theology training in school. Although I often sensed Jesus’ presence with me, years passed before I said a final “yes” to him.

In College, I attended church services of different faiths, including Christian. I was the naysayer, skeptical member of a Bible study led by two very patient women. This was mostly an intellectual exercise and, when I became busier in medical school and residency, church attendance became rare. But years later, in the midst of a crisis, my intellect acquiesced before the needs of my aching heart, and *my heart* cried out to God. I asked Jesus to reveal himself—if he was real. He did, and everything, absolutely everything changed in that instant.

My *place* of coming to believe in my Savior was utter despair bordering on hopelessness. What a purpose God accomplished through that pain and suffering. He saved my soul! Praise Him!

Genesis 32:22—33:17; Psalm 102; 1 John 3:1-10

Saturday, February 18

John 11:1-16 *This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.* (v.2)

Are we like Mary, pouring our best unto Jesus, or are we like the soldier who gave him a bitter drink (John 19:29)? Right after Jesus was offered vinegar on the cross, he gave up his spirit. Yes, the cross was a bitter drink, the blameless one crucified for the sins of many. His willing sacrifice defies explanations—and deserves a response.

Mary’s response is what I’m after. I want to pour out my best unto Jesus. As with Lazarus, I want my life to reveal God’s glory. I want to walk out of every grave that keeps me in the dark, take off the grave clothes of insecurity and fear, and walk in newness of life. I want my life to be a living sacrifice. I desire nothing less than to be like Jesus.

Thomas Merton said that our desire to please God pleases Him. Although that is a wonderful starting point, I want my *actions* to please Him. Help me, Lord, to please You not just with my desire to do so, but

with daily choices that reveal my love for You. Help me to pour my very best unto You, to the glory of Your name.

Genesis 35:1-20; Psalms 107:33-43, 108; 1 John 3:11-18

by Amaryllis Sánchez Wohlever, MD

Sunday, February 19

2 Corinthians 3:7-18 *But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.* (vv.16-18 NIV)

The desire of my heart (and I'll bet yours too) is to be more and more like Jesus. How does that happen? "As the Spirit of the Lord works within us," we are transformed. What must I do for the Spirit of the Lord to work in me? 1) Acknowledge he is Lord of All. 2) Accept that his saving grace applies to me personally. 3) Cooperate with the process of sanctification (being made holy). As a child I was told that you become like the company you keep. That sounded negative then, but now it sounds like a delightful promise. The more I hang around with the Holy Spirit, the more I become like Jesus. Thank You, Lord, that we are a reflection of your glory.

Just in case we missed it the other 147 times, the Psalms for the day direct us to praise Him! Praise Him! Praise Him!

Proverbs 26:1-23; Psalms 148, 149, 150; Luke 9:18-27

Monday, February 20

Psalm 25 *The LORD is good and does what is right; he shows the proper path to those who go astray.* (v.8 NLT)

To stray means to go away from where you belong. Our proverb for today says, "A person who strays from home is like a bird that strays from its nest" (v.8). *Seabiscuit*, a movie I saw recently is a true story about an abused horse. The racehorse, Seabiscuit, has great tenacity for overcoming life's obstacles. Seabiscuit doesn't have the right physical

characteristics to be a racehorse, nor does he have the appropriate breeding papers. The horse's tenacious example encourages all of the characters in this true story to rise above the very difficult circumstances in their lives and fulfill their destinies. The trainer makes an observation regarding the abused horse, Seabiscuit. "They've had her running in circles until she doesn't know why she was born." That's a good analogy of my life when I stray from God. We were born to know Him, love Him, and serve Him. Where do we belong? As Christ followers we belong tucked into the Father's heart of love, safe under the shadow of His wing, following where He leads. When we stray His strong voice will call us back to the proper path.

Proverbs 27:1-6, 10-12; Philippians 2:1-13; John 18:15-18, 25-27

Tuesday, February 21

Philippians 3:1-11 *I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.* (vv.10-11)

I am writing this immediately following the power blackout that covered several states. Whenever one of these happens, it raises the awareness of our need for electrical power to maintain life, as we know it, in this present age. If we can see our need for power in the physical world then, how much more is our need for power in the spiritual realm? Power to do what? Power to put our fleshly lives to death and live according to the direction of the Holy Spirit. Power to love God and others and to accept His truth. Power to bring health to our hurting bodies and emotions. How do we get this power? We get it by faith (believing God). We surrender our lives to God and receive what He has already given.

Father God, I give you my whole life. I accept your suffering, death, and resurrection on my behalf. I ask you to fill me with the power of Your Holy Spirit. Thank You, Father, in Jesus' name, Amen.

Proverbs 30:1-4, 24-33; Psalms 26, 28; John 18:28-38

Wednesday, February 22

Hebrews 12:1-14 *Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.* (vv.10-11)

Discipline is not a pretty word. I shrink back when it comes time to consider my mouth, my weight, and my physical fitness. I often discipline myself because of an earthy image. Oh, how shortsighted of me! God disciplines us for eternity and to be usable to Him here on earth. The harvest is indeed ripe, but I am often distracted with trivial matters. He wants us to be sensitive to His voice at all times, discussing every decision with Him in the light of His mighty Truth. What area of my life is He asking me to correct today? I often care more about what others will think of me than what God thinks. This fear of man must go if I am to remain in God's holy presence. Do I have to try harder? No! I must repent and allow Him to do the rest. He died for me because He knew I couldn't work it out for myself.

Thank You, Father, for disciplining me as your child.

Amos 5:6-15; Psalms 32, 95, 143; Luke 18:9-14

Thursday, February 23

Philippians 3:12-21 *Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.* (vv.12-14)

How can I be all that Jesus Christ wants me to be? How do I forget the past and press on? When I first came to "know" Christ there were many beliefs in my past that didn't agree with God's truth. Do I just turn my back on all that has gone before and start as if that day were day one? That really isn't possible, is it? Our past keeps popping up until we deal with it.

My earthly father was inattentive and unable (or unwilling) to listen to me. I judged and condemned him for that. Because of my

earthly father's character flaw, I believed my heavenly Father was like that also. I became aware of that connection between my past experience and my present belief system through the conviction of the Holy Spirit. I asked God to forgive me for judging my father and then forgave my father for his shortcomings. God changed my heart so I could believe He was trustworthy and would listen to me.

Habakkuk 3:1-18; Psalm 37:1-18; John 17:1-8

Friday, February 24

Philippians 4:1-9 *Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. If you do this, you will experience God's peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.* (vv.6-7)

Paul advises: 1) don't worry, 2) pray about everything, 3) thank God for all He has done. What a simple recipe for constant peace and joy in our walk through this life!

We could probably change the order of Paul's directions like this: 1) thank God for all He has done, 2) ask Him for what you need, 3) believe you've received it.

Lord, we choose Your way to peace today.

Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32; Psalms 31, 95; John 17:9-19

Saturday, February 25

John 17:20-26 *"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me."* (vv.20-21)

Jesus is praying for us. He's asking his Father for unity in those who believe in him. As I look around I find real unity very scarce. To unite means to join together as one. In contrast, compromise means a settlement in which each side makes concessions. What does the process of reaching unity look like? If you and I were in disagreement over an issue, would talking about the issue bring us to unity? It might help to clarify the issue, but it wouldn't bring us to unity, not if we were truly in disagreement.

If I asked the Holy Spirit how he stood on the issue and you asked the Holy Spirit how he stood on the issue, would he give each of us a different answer? No. Why do we need unity? So the world will believe. Is it worth seeking answers from the Holy Spirit so we can live in unity helping others to believe? I sure think so.

Ezekiel 39:21-29; Psalms 30, 32; Philippians 4:10-20

by Charlene Laird

Sunday, February 26

John 12:44-50 *Then Jesus cried out, "When a man believes in me, he does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me. When he looks at me, he sees the one who sent me."* (vv.44-45)

Whenever I hear the words in Scripture, "Jesus cried out," my full attention is given. Whenever I hear anyone "cry out," I know passion from deep inside the heart is being funneled into words. When I look back, the times I have "cried out" often were occasions of exasperation where I passionately wanted to clarify a truth. The "cry" and the words together send a powerful message.

Here, Jesus summarizes his message to his then disciples, and to all future disciples including you and me today, and many others in the future. Jesus cries out, "When he looks at me, he sees the one who sent me." Later in John's gospel, Jesus says, "Anyone who has seen me *has* seen the Father" (John 14:9). If I can paraphrase, I hear Jesus say, "You want to see the Father? You're looking at him!"

On this first Sunday in Lent my heart and soul cry out to Jesus in humility, gratefulness, and love. And I look ahead to his passionate, painful display of love for me.

Daniel 9:3-10; Psalms 63:1-11, 98; Hebrews 2:10-18

Monday, February 27

Mark 1:1-13 *I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way.* (v.2)

John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus to enter the scene. I have had people "prepare the way" for me to recognize Jesus. I grew up in the Roman Catholic tradition and I know that church life and schooling helped prepare me to identify and accept Jesus. I have also met

people who have prayed for me and nurtured me in the faith. I had a Bible study leader who, with the help of the Holy Spirit, helped open the Word to me in such a way that Jesus became the focal point in my life. God used these holy people to prepare the way for me to see Him. Soon it was my turn to prepare the way for others. Raising our girls, teaching Sunday school, praying for friends and family—what a high privilege it is to prepare our hearts to receive God's love, grace, protection, and life!

Genesis 37:1-11; Psalms 41, 52; 1 Corinthians 1:1-19

Tuesday, February 28

Mark 1:14-28 *Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"* (vv.14-15)

Good News! Twice in two verses we hear this same message. It's nearly impossible to keep glad tidings to yourself. I know when I want to share some good news my fingers quickly punch the buttons on the phone. If the person on the other end doesn't answer I don't leave a message because I want to be with them when they hear it! I want to share in the joy!

Jesus *is* the good news. He came to usher in the kingdom of God. During this time of Lent as we prepare to witness God's passionate love for us, let us be on our knees in humility and open our hearts receive his gift. He proves his love as he gives his very life for us. Holy is our God.

Genesis 37:12-24; Psalm 45; 1 Corinthians 1:20-31

Wednesday, February 29

Mark 1:29-45 *Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.* (v.35)

Can you imagine all the things that were on Jesus' mind? Up to this point in Mark's gospel, among other things, Jesus had been: baptized, saw the Holy Spirit descend upon him, and heard the Father say, "You are my son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." Then we read about the temptation in the desert, his calling the disciples, healing all those who came to him, and teaching with authority. Yes, I would say Jesus had a few things on his mind! This Scripture is a powerful testimony to Jesus' need for privacy and prayer. Jesus is the

Way! Our lives are ever so busy. Whenever I want direction the first thing I need to do is get alone with God. The two-way communication of prayer will bring wisdom and discernment to meet the days and challenges ahead. I *need* Jesus.

Genesis 37:25-36; Psalm 119:49-72; 1 Corinthians 2:1-13

Thursday, March 1

1 Corinthians 2:14—3:15 *I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow.* (v.6)

We have many potted plants in our courtyard. Some I planted by seed. Others were bought at the nursery in very small pots when they were young but established and then transferred to larger pots so their roots could go deeper. Others, amazingly, are “volunteers.” They spring up from the ground carried by an unknown source—perhaps the wind. No matter where the plants come from, when they are in my care they all receive the same nourishment. I fertilize and water them and pull the weeds violating their space. But all I can do is help them along. I did not manufacture the seed or sapling, nor do I make them grow. But I help provide the care that encourages them to flourish. The same method is in effect for us in our world. The stimulus for growth is all around us but it is in Jesus that we flourish. He is creator and sustainer of all things: “In him all things hold together” (Colossians 1:17). I thank God for those who fed and cared for me, physically and spiritually. And I thank God for His spirit who sustains me at all times, through drought and in times of plenty.

Genesis 39:1-23; Psalm 50; Mark 2:1-12

Friday, March 2

Mark 2:13-22 *Once again Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to him, and he began to teach them.* (v.13)

It’s amazing to me that Jesus began teaching in the synagogue and here we see that his classroom is outdoors by a lakeside. Teaching moments can happen anywhere. They come in all shapes and sizes. Sometimes you are the teacher; other times, the student. My heart always goes out to the instructor and tiny apprentice who decide to have a teaching moment at the checkout counter of the grocery store! Those are

hard but necessary lessons—for both!

If I keep my mind open and teachable Jesus will transform me. My prayer follows the song called *Day by Day*. The chorus goes: “Dear Lord, three things I pray; to see thee more clearly, love thee more dearly, follow thee more nearly, day by day.”

Genesis 40:1-23; Psalms 40, 54; 1 Corinthians 3:16-23

Saturday, March 3

Mark 2:23—3:6 *Jesus looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.”* (v.5)

I wonder how many times Jesus has been deeply distressed by my stubborn heart. The dictionary illustrates the word “stubborn” as: hard, tough, or stiff; difficult to shape or work; obstinate. I know there are times when I am so stuck in my old comfortable ways and thoughts that it must grieve God. I’ve learned about myself that if I haven’t had a change of heart on something recently I am not growing. I think God wants us to continually evaluate the challenges before us in the light of his Word and Spirit. “Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path” (Psalm 119:105). I need to keep my heart open to his transforming love and remain teachable.

Genesis 41:1-13; Psalm 55; 1 Corinthians 4:1-7

by Elizabeth Tucker

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