

Devotions – May 2-8, 2021

By Rebecca Peterson

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Sunday, May 2, 2021

Scripture: Matthew 25:37, 40

Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food or thirsty and gave you something to drink?" ... and the King will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."

Once when I was teaching in a medium security prison, a young man in my classroom asked me if I could tell him why he seemed to be able to do the work so much more easily now than when he had been in a public school. He had thought he was just too stupid to get the schoolwork done correctly.

We talked about how he had been homeless and because of that was frequently hungry and cold. He was scared to sleep because of the insecurity of being unprotected. It hit him profoundly that he had not been safe enough to focus on learning in such a life. He realized how sad it was that prison allowed him to concentrate on schoolwork because he was secure in a locked room to sleep and always knew that he would be fed three meals every day.

We all need to remember that helping our fellow creatures be warm and fed sets them free to seek the will of God in their life.

Prayer thought:

Help us look beyond the pity we feel when we see people hungry and without shelter. Help us realize that our gift might be the freedom they need to grow.



Monday, May 3, 2021

Scripture: Matthew 7:24-25

Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock.

My niece when she was a teenager would do stupid, thoughtless things that damaged property and people. When someone would try to bring these problems to her attention she would say, "I

just did it by accident." Finally, one day, I stopped her and loudly told her, "Maybe next time you should ON PURPOSE do it carefully and correctly!!" She gave me a weird look, but I noticed that she was much less apt to make foolish mistakes.

Now that my granddaughter is the same age, she has trouble noticing the results of her actions in much the same way. We recently had a long discussion about the difference between adults and children. Adults notice that doors need to be shut behind you when you go through them. Children just expect someone else to pay the electric bill and buy the food. She is really exploring how her actions change other people's course. We talk about once a week and always end up discussing how we need to be strong and true to what we know is good. She feels battered and beat on with the force of the world at school.

You don't accidentally build a house on a good foundation. You search for the bedrock. You gather supplies and equipment. You consult with experts. Then you purposely move forward with the build.

Prayer thought:

Keep our hearts strong and on course. Guide our minds and feet to Your path.



Tuesday, May 4, 2021

Scripture: Isaiah 43:1-2

But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel. Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, You are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you. When you walk through the fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.

It was early evening when I got one of my favorite phone calls from a parent. "What did you do to him? He is completely different!"

Joey came into my classroom in a constant state of frantic physical and verbal panic. It took over a year to get him to calm down enough to reveal what was the cause of that debilitating fear. His father had committed suicide and he was terrified that he would follow his father's footsteps as he did in so many other ways. Another year of therapy before that moment his mother could see was a watershed for him. I was with him when he reached down in his soul and felt the depth of the love that created him. He came out of that experience a new "creation" no longer tossed around by the thunder and wind of emotions. When I saw him a few years later I could see by the look on his face he had not forgotten from where his help came each day. He

picked me up and twirled me around the hallway. He was always a joyful soul. He found the solid bedrock of his soul and stood on it.

Prayer thought:

Thank you, Father, for your constant steady companionship. Thank you for your sure and endless guardianship of my soul.



Wednesday, May 5, 2021

Scripture: 2nd Corinthians 5:16-17

From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old is passed away; see, everything has become new!

Jacob stopped me on the playground every day begging me to ask for him to be transferred to my classroom. I didn't want him and told him that I did not want a student who had to go to the recovery room every day disrupting my other students. In a few weeks, sure enough, I got the paperwork telling me that Jacob was coming to my room. I stopped him at the door and made him watch his feet step over the threshold into the classroom. I told him that MY students did not need to go to the recovery room. I told him that he was now a different person because I did not have pupils that refused to do their work. (Not much faith in my heart.) I introduced him to the others as a new student that would be an asset to the classroom. They all welcomed him and told him that they would help him get things done until he could do it all by himself.

WOW. It worked. He never went to the recovery room, not once! Not for the first time did I realize that we need to view people in a new way. Jacob needed people who would allow him to be a new "creation". We all need people who will allow us to become new.

Prayer thoughts:

Cleanse our hearts and minds of the old prejudices and open us up to the possibilities of your grace, not only in our lives but in the lives of all our fellow creatures.



Thursday, May 6, 2021

Scripture: Psalm 98:7-9

7 Let the sea roar, and all that fills it, the world and those who dwell therein.

8 Let the rivers clap their hands, and the hills ring out with joy before the Lord, who comes to judge the earth.

9 The Lord will judge the world with righteousness and the people with equity.

This has been my favorite psalm for years. I have always felt a call to “sing a new song” and not be ashamed to sing it loudly. Most people get so wrapped up in having dominion over the earth that they don’t listen to how loudly that creation praises the God that created it. My husband put into words something I have felt for years. It is one thing to realize that God created the sun; that this is a necessary part of what keeps us alive. But God did not need to make the sunrises and sunsets so beautiful. This beauty is, I feel, part of how God’s creation claps its hands. We all have the privilege of hearing the wind blow through the trees. It is as beautiful a melody as any choir.

Prayer thoughts:

Give me new ears and eyes. Then give me a mind to see and hear.



Friday, May 7, 2021

Scripture: Jeremiah 12:1

You will be in the right, O Lord,

when I lay charges against you;

But let me put my case to you.

Why does the way of the guilty prosper?

Why do all who are treacherous thrive?

Poor Jeremiah. He spent a lot of time feeling like a victim. His story does not seem to be very happy. But my life experience has taught me that the way of the guilty does not prosper much. After years teaching in Special Ed classrooms both in prison and in the public school system, I haven’t seen anyone thrive through being wicked or treacherous. Like the prisoner who told me how he had made a hundred thousand dollars in the one year he sold drugs. He was in prison for fifteen years. I showed him how when you divide that by the fifteen years – I was actually making more per year than he did. Then I asked what bank this money was in so he could at least get it when he got out. He hung his head and said it was all gone. He perked up and told me that he was smart to put his cars and home in his wife’s name so they were not confiscated. Sadly, he had no idea where his wife was because she had left him and sold the home.

My favorite was a young man who kept asking me what I was going to do about his breaking the rules. I told him that I was going to have a happy life. I have a good marriage and my house is paid for. Then I asked him what HE was going to do with a life that was full of broken rules and no education. Thank God he listened. He was able to turn around his poor behavior and get back into regular classroom within a few months.

Prayer thoughts:

Help us stop looking at other people's sins and shortcomings. Help us rejoice in the world that surrounds us. Give us a grateful heart so we can see how all the small things add up to a bountiful gift from God.



Saturday, May 8, 2021

Scripture: I John 3:17-18

How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help? Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.

I have always loved the 100 year-old hymn, "Is Thy Cruse of Comfort Failing?" The last verse speaks to me profoundly.

"Is thy heart a well left empty? None but God its void can fill.
Nothing but a ceaseless fountain can its ceaseless longing still.
Is thy heart a living power? Self-entwined, its strength sinks low;
it can only live in loving, and by serving love will grow."

My husband has taught me how loving someone else more than your own self works. He works hard at giving me what I need. What I have learned is that this leaves me free to concentrate on how to give him what he needs. As this verse points out nothing but a ceaseless fountain can still the longing in human hearts. We find strength to search for God through our mutual support of each other.

Prayer thoughts:

Never be afraid to let God's love shine through you. That love will never run out. There is always more for both you and those who need you.

