

And perhaps today is a good day to follow suit. (No tuxedo required!) Tell the Lord you will serve Him for better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health.

Psalm 105:1-22; Colossians 2:8-23; Matthew 4:12-17

Saturday, April 25

Exodus 25:1-22 *“And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst.”* (v.8)

The church isn't a building. It is people. Accountants, teachers, corporate executives, homemakers, dental hygienists, plumbers, lawyers, clergy, physicians, and clerks. And wherever the people of God go, the church is found. It is grammatically incorrect to say we go to church. We are the church!

But that is not to say that the church facility is unimportant. Quite to the contrary. The place the church gathers to do its work of worship each week is sacred space. As in the days of Moses and the Israelites, it is the place that has been created, adorned, and set apart to represent the holy presence of God who is with us at all times.

The sanctuary is a significant symbol for God's people. It is holy otherness. It suggests that God has His own room in our house. It's His room, but His room reminds us He is a part of our lives. Even though it may be the least used room on your church property, it is the most important.

As you go to worship tomorrow, be especially mindful of the architecture, the furnishings, and the symbolic art that surrounds you. Allow these silent voices to whisper to your heart that God “is in the house.” Take comfort from the knowledge that you are most welcome in His presence.

Psalms 30, 32; Colossians 3:1-17; Matthew 4:18-25

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PO Box 380, Winter Park, FL 32790
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Good News Daily

Volume XXVI

April 19-25, 2026

Number 16

Sunday, April 19

Exodus 18:1-12 *Then Moses told his father-in-law all that the Lord had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake...and how the LORD had delivered them.* (v.8 RSV)

Moses is a model for us in our relationship with in-laws. He resists the temptation to simply succumb to small talk when his wife's father comes for a visit. After the compulsory comments of welfare and weather, Moses carries the content of the conversation to a higher level. He begins to share out of his own experience how God has been involved in his life. Can you imagine?

Many of our extended family members are anything-but interested in matters of faith. For many, one's relationship with Jesus Christ is considered a private matter quarantined from family conversations. Still, it is probably safe to assume that our in-laws are interested in us. They want to know what's been going on in our life.

Moses' approach is noteworthy. He doesn't preach a sermon. He gloves his faith in the approachable fabric of personal experience. He simply shares ways God had been at work in his life. As you take time today to focus on the Lord, ask Him to open the eyes of non-believing family members to evidences of God's grace in your life.

Psalms 148, 149, 150; 1 John 2:7-17; Mark 16:9-20

Monday, April 20

Exodus 18:13-27 *“You and the people with you will wear yourselves out, for the thing is too heavy for you; you are not able to perform it alone.”* (v.18)

From our point of view, it was a near ideal situation. Not only was Moses' father-in-law genuinely interested in Israel's God, but he was also sincerely concerned for his daughter's husband. He saw that Moses was bordering on “burn out” and spoke up in the nick of time.

Unlike the Jethro we remember from the Beverly Hillbillies television program, this Jethro was a wise and prudent man. As a priest in Midian, he had learned ways of working smarter with effectiveness rather than working harder with exhaustion. In Jethro we see a model of delegation and mutual ministry that has not only been embraced by the church but by successful corporations. We are foolish to create work or ministry environments where we are indispensable.

Moses was willing to accept Jethro's constructive criticism. He didn't become defensive. He didn't reluctantly submit. He gratefully incorporated

the gist of Jethro's plan. Moses apparently sensed that God was using a member of his family as a means of personal support and divine insight. It is likely that the Lord is attempting to speak through family members in our lives. Those who know our weaknesses and strengths are worth listening to. Are you willing to listen?

Psalm 25; 1 Peter 5:1-14; Matthew 1:1-17, 3:1-6

Tuesday, April 21

Exodus 19:1-16 *"You have seen what I did to the Egyptians and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself."* (v.4)

Spring. I love this season! It's the time of the year when trees blossom, meadows flower, and April showers color the backyard green once again. It is also the time when the migrant birds begin their return trip north. They soar unrestrained high above the ground. Their mid-air winged dance is a celebration of this awesome season of renewed life.

Perhaps it was in the springtime that the Creator gave to Moses this picture of His provision and faithfulness. Being carried on the wings of eagles in flight. Our gracious Lord desires our companionship. He who created this beautiful world created us as well. He made us in His own image in order that we could enjoy fellowship with Him.

In the desert of our daily lives God dispatches mighty eagles to swoop down and pick us up. And we are carried high above the circumstances under which we are inclined to stoop, pooped and stressed. But we are not just lifted above the drudgeries of routine for the sake of being airborne. The Lord sends His flock of carrier birds to transport us into His very presence.

Psalms 26, 28; Colossians 1:1-14; Matthew 3:7-12

Wednesday, April 22

Exodus 19:16-25 *Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God; and they took their stand at the foot of the mountain.* (v.17)

Some wear a collar. Some wear a cross. Some a clerical robe. Regardless, they all bear a calling which their vestments merely symbolize.

I'm speaking of those who watch over your soul as those who will one day give an account. We call them priests or pastors or shepherds.

From the very beginning God has called and equipped individuals whose privilege in life is to symbolize His presence and lead His flock. Moses is such a shepherd. He goes before the people of God to give them a sense of direction and protection and to remind them of their election as a holy nation. Moses is the person God uses to help His people take a stand. The Israelites needed Moses, and they usually esteemed his leadership.

Most who know would agree. There has never been a time when it has been more difficult to be a minister. Expectations are unrealistic. Author-

ity is questioned. Commitment is questionable. The church is viewed by culture-at-large as irrelevant. Nonetheless, God still calls individuals to wear the mantle of leadership and go before His people with stage directions and scripts for the drama of worship and life.

Ministry is a lonely task. Those who serve you need affirmation. Have you prayed for them today? Why not drop them a note or e-mail them with words of appreciation. Esteem the role he or she represents in spite of their imperfections.

Psalm 38; Colossians 1:15-23; Matthew 3:13-17

Thursday, April 23

Exodus 20:1-21 *"In every place where I cause my name to be remembered I will come to you and bless you."* (v.24b)

Forgetfulness is one of the consequences of a fallen world. From the beginning of time people have had a tendency to forget the ways God has been faithful in our lives. We are not an exception. And when we forget to factor the Lord into our lives, we get ourselves into big trouble.

To counter our mental lapses the Lord has given us symbols to jog our memories of His goodness and His purpose. In the Old Testament there is the rainbow, a pile of stones, the ark of the covenant, and a jar of manna. In the New Testament there is a cup and a loaf, not to mention a cross and a flame. These visual aids remind us of who we are and to whom we belong.

When we allow these symbols to make regular deposits in our memory banks, we are blessed with a sense of His presence and the ability to trust Him for the things that overwhelm us.

Psalm 37:1-18; Colossians 1:24—2:7; Matthew 4:1-11

Friday, April 24

Exodus 24:1-18 *"All the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient."* (v.7)

The term May Day can either refer to the first day of May or a call for help from someone in distress. I'd like to call you to embrace both definitions at the same time. At the beginning of a new month, it is wise to remind ourselves of our plight apart from the Father. Recognizing our tendency to drift upon the sea of cultural relativism, we'd best call upon the Lord to guide us safely through the days that lie ahead. May Day! May Day!

Those who followed Moses called upon the Lord. They, too, know all too well their own tendency for moral shipwrecks. And so their understanding of their need for God was verbalized in a statement of commitment. Like a bride or groom at the altar they said "I do" to Him. They pledged their devotion as a tangible expression of their faith. They went on record to say they would do what the Lord desired.