

May God continue to protect us from the evil that surrounds us. May He strengthen us to march forward against the foe. And may His faithfulness and love be always with us.

Leviticus 23:23-44; Psalms 75, 76; Matthew 7:13-21

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Sunday, May 3

Hebrews 12:1-14 *And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.* (vv.1b-2 NIV)

In the person of Jesus we have an example of everything we need in order to lead an effective life. He is the perfect one, the prize to be won by a life dedicated to him and his kingdom on earth. Nothing less than life eternal awaits us in his embrace.

The race can and will be ours if we but fix our attention on him as he did on us at Calvary. Our struggles with sin, our limited human abilities, our lack of patience and our doubts can all be diminished to nothing if we but trust in Jesus and fasten our eyes on his radiance at the finish line.

This is not easy. It is a life of hard work and discipline to turn away from our own inward desires and turn instead outward to Jesus. What I am always so grateful for is that Jesus offers us help with the Holy Spirit, who strengthens us for the work that we need to do. All we have to do is ask.

Leviticus 8:1-13, 30-36; Psalms 24, 29; Luke 4:16-30

Monday, May 4

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18 *“But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen.”* (v.6a)

My mother was a quiet person, a nurse who spent all of her adult life helping the sick and their families cope with illnesses that were often terminal. This put a great deal of stress on her, but she maintained an outward appearance of calm competency mixed with gentle and genuine concern.

I never heard my mother pray aloud although she was a regular at church and the spiritual leader of the family. She would go to her room and read her Bible and do her devotions and she would pray silently and at length. My siblings and I referred to this time of hers as “talking to God.”

I know now that it was her personal relationship with Jesus Christ that gave her the strength to continue in a demanding job and then through her own illness. She knew that God was with her every day.

Leviticus 16:1-19; Psalms 56, 57, 58; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Tuesday, May 5

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 *Therefore encourage one another and build each other up just as in fact you are doing.* (v.11)

I can remember times when I have been disciplined by a friend in the church. Words of encouragement can be so powerful. They can carry us over the top and can be the turning point of a problem. We are reminded that we

are not alone in our trouble by this simple act of a friend, sensing our need and offering encouragement.

That someone cares about us can be a wonderful feeling. When someone reaches out and touches us with their kindness, their interest, and their attention, we feel blessed and loved. As we all are members of the Body of Christ, then each kindness is a gift from Christ directly, as we all live in him.

Each of us needs reassurance now and then and that implies that we, too, can offer our support to help others. We worship together, beside each other in praise of our loving God and in thanksgiving for all He gives us. God's gifts to us are given to be shared with others.

Leviticus 16:20-34; Psalms 61, 62; Matthew 6:7-15

Wednesday, May 6

Matthew 6:19-24 *"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."* (v.21)

Even though I understand that this passage is part of Christ's teaching about the love of money, every time I read it, I think immediately of my family: my wife, my four children, my two grandchildren. And then my thoughts shift to my church family, the other Christians in my life that mean so much to me. This is treasure, indeed, and this is where my heart is.

It is so easy to become distracted by all that clamors for our attention, especially when things are not going well, when illness or financial crisis or just plain busyness gets in the way and we forget that which is in our hearts, our treasures. All I have to do is look at my children peacefully asleep and I am immediately mindful of the true treasures of life. We could say in reverse, "Look into your heart, there is your treasure."

In a world that is full of worldly priorities, let us not forget the treasures in our hearts.

Leviticus 19:1-18; Psalm 72; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28

Thursday, May 7

Psalm 71 *But as for me, I will always have hope.* (v.14a)

Christians hope for many things, and it is our faith that assures us that the things hoped for will come to pass.

We hope that we will be with Christ in heaven, and our faith assures us that we will abide with him as he abides with us.

We hope that God's will be done for us, and our faith assures us, that if we actively and sincerely seek His will, we are living in fulfillment of His will.

We hope that God's grace be given us, and our faith assures us that God's grace, His most precious gift, is ours.

We hope that our unbelief will be conquered by the courage of our belief, and our faith assures us that our belief will free us from a world of slavery to sin.

We hope that God will never abandon us, and our faith assures us that nothing can ever separate us from the love of God.

We hope for the light, and our faith assures us that the light of Jesus Christ will ever shine on us.

Leviticus 19:26-37; Psalm 70; 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12; Matthew 6:25-34

Friday, May 8

2 Thessalonians 2:1-17 *Stand firm, and hold to the teachings we passed on to you.* (v.15)

This injunction by Paul is something we can all use to encourage others and to arm ourselves against the enemy. One of the ways our faith is shown to others is by the firmness of our belief, our unshakable faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Gospels never waver in the story they tell: Jesus Christ is God incarnate from the Virgin Mary; he lived a life of purity from sin; died for us voluntarily to cleanse us of our sins and; triumphed over death with his resurrection. Now that is something to hold onto.

The Gospels are our anchor, the solid rock upon which we stake our faith and our refuge from all assailants. But the Gospel of Jesus Christ is, above all else, the witness to the wonderful love of God for us. Our faith brings us unimaginable joy.

It is easy to stand firm when we are anchored to the precious love of Jesus Christ and filled with the joy of his love for us.

Leviticus 23:1-22; Psalm 106:1-18; Matthew 7:1-12

Saturday, May 9

2 Thessalonians 3:1-18 *But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.* (v.3)

When we believe in the power of God to do all the things that we attribute to Him we also believe that He will never abandon us, that He will be faithful and do what He promises. This belief empowers us with the strength and protection of the Holy Spirit. No one can do anything to us if we are so protected.

But spiritual warfare is waged beneath the surface of our lives. God promises to protect us from all evil. We are warned of the danger by numerous scriptural references. Our prayers to the Lord to deliver us from evil are answered. The Bible stands ready to guide us in all things. We are a part of the Body of Christ and in those numbers find strength and encouragement. Finally, we have trusted Christian leaders to guide us.