

Saturday, August 28

Acts 11:1-18 *“So if God gave them the same gift as he gave us, who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could oppose God?” When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying “So then, God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life.”* (vv.17-18)

I remember well; right after my husband and I first met. We were sitting on a hill in Woolwich, Maine and were looking up at the heavens. I lamented that I had never seen a shooting star. At that very moment, to my amazement, a star then streamed across the dark sky in front of me. Actually, it took us both by surprise. “Anything else you want?” he added with a big grin on his face. Little did we know that this was to be a sign, an “Aha!” moment in our life.

Everyone has shooting star moments in his or her life. I call them shooting star moments because it is a moment in time, a definitive moment when you can say the light bulb goes on, the pieces fit together, and you get what is going on. When the gentiles were filled with the Holy Spirit in Caesarea it was a shooting star moment for Peter and for the church leaders. This was the exact moment the Jewish people recognized that God was going to save not only his Jewish followers but the Gentile world as well! The moment was huge! Each one of us should thank God for this shooting star moment, for because of that day, you and I have the great joy and privilege of being a part of the family of God.

Job 9:1, 10:1-9, 16-22; Psalms 20, 21; John 8:12-20

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Sunday, August 22

Mark 6:1-6a *“What’s this wisdom that has been given him, that he even does miracles! Isn’t this the carpenter?”* (vv.2b-3a NIV)

Okay, I have a confession. I actually like to sweep. Sweeping the floor provides me with thinking time. Big things are accomplished in this one menial task. I make mental lists, I work through stresses and snags, make plans for my life, and I pray for others. Recently I had an interesting thought, I bet Jesus spent quite a lot of time sweeping and cleaning up after a long day of making tools, bowls, and plows. I find it fascinating to think about it in certain terms—God swept!

What a thought. The fact that Jesus was a carpenter is quite significant. Actually Jesus served as a carpenter much longer than He ever served as a teacher. His life and public ministry were groomed through his years of manual labor and his thinking time. In the Scriptures he makes numerous references to things that a carpenter would relate to such as yoke, keystone, building a house on the solid ground. The fact that God came to us as a mere carpenter raised the dignity of our daily work. He considers what we do to be honorable in His eyes.

The next time you are tempted to feel like your ordinary tasks are not so important, think about how our Savior’s life and ministry was shaped around what some would consider ordinary tasks. Don’t be surprised if God touches your work and it becomes thinking time for bigger things to happen in your life.

Job 4:1-6; 12-21; Psalms 146, 147; Revelation 4:1-11

Monday, August 23

Acts 9:19b-31 *Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Christ.* (v.22)

This passage makes me ask a question. “Does my life prove to others that Jesus is indeed my Lord?” You have heard the old phrase from the 1600’s “The proof is in the pudding.” The entire phrase actually is “the proof of the pudding is in the eating.” What that means is to fully value or prove something it needs to be tried and tested. Saul’s life was one that was tried and tested by everyone in the Roman’s world. He was a puzzle to everyone. This man who fervently ridiculed, even had Christians killed, was now preaching about Jesus everywhere. Saul, who later changed his name to Paul, explained his conversion experience over and over and gave evidence that he was genuinely changed and that he desired to now live for his Jesus. But for all his words, it was by observing his new life that the Jews and Gentiles had their proof that his life was changed.

This really hits home. “Am I really making the case for Christ in my life? Am I proving my faith to others by my words and actions that Jesus is not only important but is the Lord of my life? As I carry this analogy a bit further the real proof of faith is in a Christian’s daily faith, a faith that is tried and tested through life’s circumstances. People watch our lives, especially people who are not yet Christians. Is there proof in our life?

Job 4:1-4, 5:1-11, 17-21, 26-27; Psalms 1, 2, 3; John 6:52-59

Tuesday, August 24

John 6:60-71 *On hearing it, many of his disciples said, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?" Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, "Does this offend you?"* (vv.60-61)

If Jesus lived here today He would surely have made the front page of the newspapers often. I can see the headlines now: "Jewish Preacher Causes Havoc on the East Side." This simple teacher roused the crowds and created controversy everywhere he went. To the world he was presumptuous, offensive, and narrow-minded. However, to those being saved he was precious and the source of heavenly wisdom.

I find it comforting that Jesus is straightforward with sheer truth even if it leaves me uncomfortable and doubting at times. He has no problem addressing me right where I am in my doubt. When I stumble upon a Scripture that does not fit into a nice, orderly package for my limited human mind I have to stop and have a moment with my Lord. This is the place I call faith-point. Faith-point is the place where I must let go of my ways and cling to his even when they are not easy to hear. By experience I have found that every time I let go and trust the Lord, I find his words to always be true and life-giving.

Jesus does not always keep us comfortable but he keeps us walking in the truth. "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." In my faith-point moments I realize that I serve a mysterious God who overwhelms me with his love and grace, overshadowing all the questions and doubts that I may have.

Job 6:1-4, 8-15 ,21; Psalms 5, 6; Acts 9:32-43

Wednesday, August 25

Acts 10:1-16 *One day at about three in the afternoon he had a vision. He distinctly saw an angel of God, who came to him and said, "Cornelius!" Cornelius stared at him in fear. "What is it, Lord?" he asked. The angel answered, "Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God. Now send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Simon who is called Peter."* (vv.3-5)

Isn't it remarkable that God sees all that we do and hears all that we say? "How precious also are your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them!" (Psalm 139:17). My first reaction is to think about all the times that I could have done better in loving God more and remembering my neighbor before thinking of myself. Yet, I know God must look much deeper. He looks at intentions of my heart. He looks at the consistency of my offerings. This scripture in Acts is an important one. Am I trying to be consistent in keeping daily habits that honor God? Am I praying for others and giving generously to those around me?

There is no way around it. Pleasing God does have a connection with our daily habits for we must remember that He sees all that we say and do. Our Heavenly Father is a good God. If we recognize the great love that He has for us then it will only be natural that we live to please Him. In those times when I know I should Love him more, I ask him for help knowing that He can and will increase my love and open my eyes to the wonderful riches that he has in store for me. Take the time to ask this question with me today. Are you consistently honoring God? If we consistently make it a priority in our life, we will catch God's attention!

Job 6:1, 7:1-21, Psalm 119:1-24; John 7:1-13

Thursday, August 26

Psalm 18:1-20 *He reached down from on high and took hold of me; he drew me out of deep waters.* (v.16)

My adorable new granddaughter has just learned to crawl. As she explores the new world around her we must constantly keep an eye on her. We are always plucking her up as she is nearing danger, from steep drops off the bed, sharp corners, and precarious situations where she gets in over her head. Just when she is finding trouble the mighty hand of mom scoops her up by the britches. Once again, she is safe from harm.

I love the imagery here in Psalm 18. It is honestly one of my favorites. I can think of several times in my life when God initiated a rescue effort on my behalf. Sometimes I knew I was getting myself into a dangerous situation or walking too close to a temptation that would entice me in a direction other than where God desires me to go. Often, I am aware of the rescue as it is happening and other times I am not. It is breathtaking, though, as I look back and see his handprints on my britches.

Are you in deep waters today? Perhaps you are in a financial or an emotional whirlpool? Do you find yourself in some kind of dangerous corner where you cannot see your way out? If you are, be certain that help is on the way, because you are within the ever-vigilant grasp of God's mighty hand. Simply ask for his help and he will soon rescue.

Job 8:1-7, 11-19; Acts 10:17-33; John 7:14-36

Friday, August 27

Psalm 16 *Lord, you have assigned me my portion and my cup; you have made my lot secure. The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance.* (vv.5-6)

I wonder if we really grasp the inheritance that we as Christians have been given. Did you know you have an inheritance to live into right now?

I recall all the graduations that I have attended in the life of my three children. From kindergarten to college there is nothing more special than to see your child's face light up and their shoulders lift in pride as their entire name is heard over a loudspeakers. There is just something special to hear your full name read aloud. How much more special is it when our names are spoken aloud by our Heavenly Father. When we give our lives to Him everything changes and our names are beautiful to His heart. When He calls out our names the whole universe hears the pride and joy in His heart for His children. When He calls out our names He lifts up our hearts, lifts our countenance, and raises our esteem. Although we do not deserve this amazing gift of love, we long to hear the Lord call out our name.

One day God is going to show us off in a special way. His work will be finished in us and then, at that point, He will read our name aloud will walk across the stage of life and step into eternity. When we hear our names on that day, we will be ultimately be raised up in eternal dignity and joy and come to fully grasp who we are, the glorious children of God.

In my mind I think about the promise of my inheritance with God; knowing that my "lot is secure" makes me live in joy and hope each day.

Job 9:1-15, 32-35; Psalm 17; Acts 10:34-48; John 7:37-52