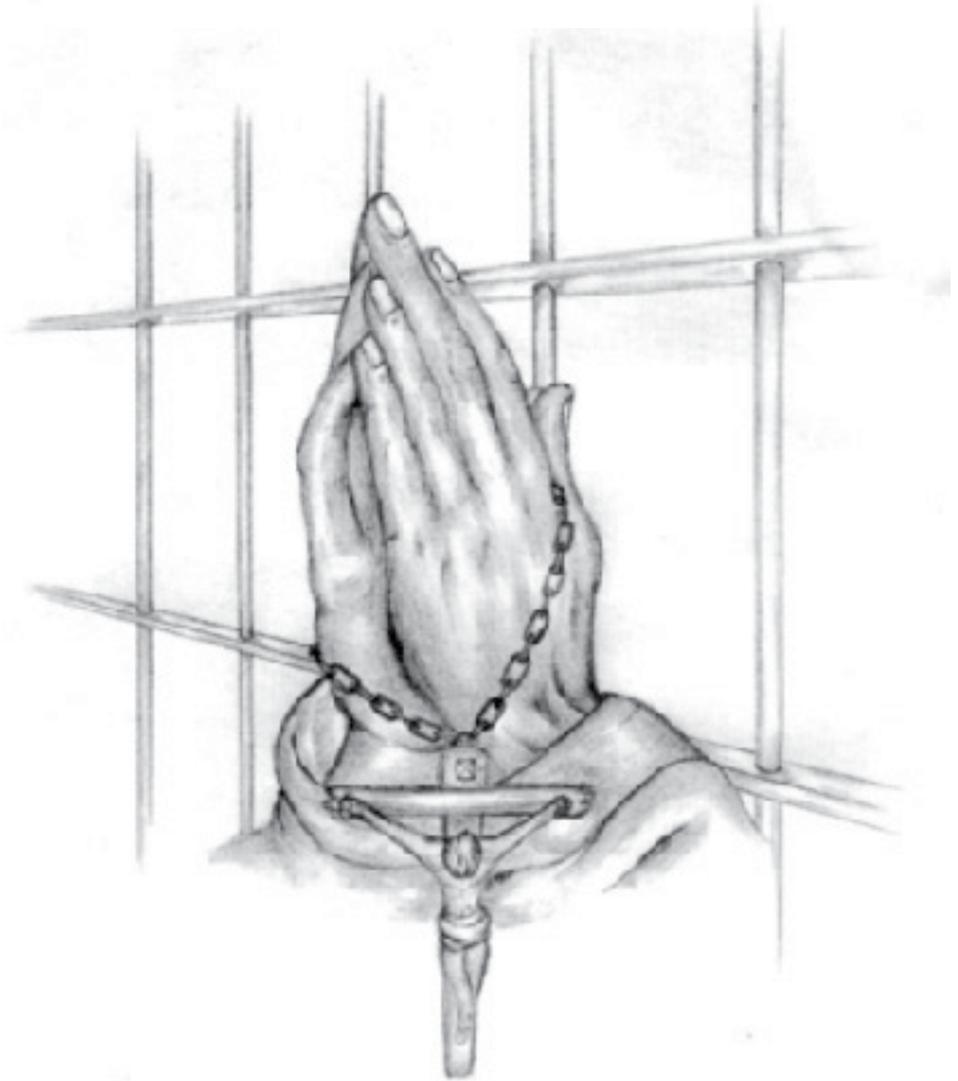


"I Am Always With You"

2019 Lenten Devotionals



BY WILLIAM TERTREMPER

Prison Congregations of America

Daily Meditation



Ash Wednesday, March 6, 2019

Matthew 28: 19-20 (NRSV) Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

Jesus makes a lot of promises in the Bible. Promises that he will never break. I have made many promises to people and to Jesus. I've broken some of them. After I broke them, I thought that Jesus would never love me because of the promises I broke. When I feel that way, I remember that Jesus said in the Bible that he will never leave us; he will always be with us.

Lord, open the eyes and hearts of people. Let them know that you will never leave them no matter what they do. Amen.

Thursday, March 7, 2019

Matthew 5:43-45 (NRSV) You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous."

I love the Lord with all my heart and soul. I believe in Jesus with all my heart. I pray for other people who need a lot of help. Jesus touches my heart so deep; he gives me true love and trust and peace in my whole life.

Jesus, I will always trust and love. Amen

Friday, March 8, 2019

Psalm 121:1-2 (NRSV) I lift up my eyes to the hills—from where will my help come? My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.

The phrase, “I am with you always,” has played out a lot in my life. Especially when I feel alone, I am reminded that God is with me always. For Jesus to always be with me helps me to know I’m never walking alone. I’ve known this to be true because in Psalm 121 it says so. Each time I’ve called on the Lord, he has always helped. At times, I have doubted God because I used to be impatient, but then the Psalm reminds me where my help is coming from. Even through the darkest struggles God is there to help us all through. We just have to look onto him for help and be patient.

God bless all your many children of the earth – believers and non-believers. Amen

Saturday, March 9, 2019

James 1:12,17-18 (NRSV) Blessed is anyone who endures temptation. Such a one has stood the test and will receive the crown of life that the Lord^[a] has promised to those who love him..., Do not be deceived, my beloved.^[b] Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.^[c] In fulfillment of his own purpose he gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would become a kind of first fruits of his creatures.

Woke up this morning and the Lord was calling my name, telling me to love my life with a purpose because I’m so worth it. He said go out and find other women who also have broken spirits; guide them and love them, and show them they have never been alone – that it was them who chose that lonely dark road. Introduce them to Jesus, show them the word and help them to lead the way. Pray that beautiful prayer of salvation. Teach them to lead by example, to put God first, to always have faith in this promise, to walk like the daughter of a king, to turn from sin, to always dress modestly, to keep a sober mind and always be honest. To stay faithful and true and to love everyone the same way God loves you!

Jesus, thank you for coming and dying for the sins of this disrespectful kid. I love you. Amen

Monday, March 11, 2019

Psalms 138:8 (nrsv) the Lord will fulfill his purpose for me; your steadfast love, O Lord, endures forever. Do not forsake the work of your hands.

We can stay in peace, knowing that the Lord, the God who created the universe, the God who spoke words into existence, has promised he will work out his plans for our lives. God knows what he's doing. His ways are better than our ways. Right now he's behind the scenes working out his plans for your life. He's arranging things in your favor, moving the wrong people out of the way, lining up the breaks you need. You may not see anything happening; you have to walk by faith and not by sight. If you stay in faith, you have God's promise that when the smoke clears, you'll be standing. If God had a refrigerator, your picture would be on it! You know that God brought you through hard times in the past, and he will bring you through the future.

Father God, thank you for your word – a lamp onto my feet and a light onto my path. Amen.

Tuesday, March 12, 2019

Luke 15:25-28,31-32 (NRSV) "Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. He replied, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.' Then the father said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.'"

I am the oldest son of my full blood brother and I, yet we have many more siblings we do not know. As my two older brothers grew up and were gone, it was placed upon me to be the "older" brother, yet I did not have good role models. I became the son who took what was not deserved at the time and went off to spend all my money foolishly, using drugs and alcohol. I was a liar and a thief and a not so good person or role model. After losing all of my possessions, including my freedom, I had to ask for help and my mother had to come and get me and set up a great homecoming for me. My younger brother couldn't understand why I was being treated so good even after I was thrown in prison and had nothing left of my will. Even to this day, I still have a house and a car because of my mother. All along the way of my discerning and troubling behaviors, God never left me and had been there through it all.

I pray for peace and understanding in this world free of diseases, cancers and addictions. Amen.

Wednesday, March 13, 2019

Matthew 6:33 (NRSV) But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

On August 14, I rode in the back of a police car for the first time in my life. Terrified and alone, I rode to prison. I saw the walls, barbed wire, and kennels for men. I had never been away from my family for more than a week, and here I was trying to cope with the truth of spending two years away. I was here behind locked doors, with no way to leave, alone, broken and collapsed in my fear. I opened my Bible and felt that I was read to. I was instructed on God's kingdom and his promises. I had come to prison to be set free. My freedom came when I was awakened to the fact that I was not and never will be alone, because God is with me always and will provide for me.

Lord, grant us the wisdom to seek you out daily for all that we need. Amen.

Thursday, March 14, 2019

Psalms 31:3-4 (NRSV) You are indeed my rock and my fortress; for your name's sake lead me and guide me, take me out of the net that is hidden for me, for you are my refuge.

I have been a drug addict for over 30 years and my life was a complete mess. I manipulated people and lied to them, just so I could get whatever I wanted through my drug world. I have been inside jails, prisons, and institutions more times than I can count. I kept all this stuff to myself so people would not know the real me. Through my incarceration, I found God, so through this time God has become my strength and has given me the strength to continue on my path with Jesus Christ. I found God through my Bible, which I have almost read. I got saved, as well as baptized, and my life has changed dramatically.

Into thine hand I commit my spirit. Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord of truth. Amen.

Friday, March 15, 2019

John 3:16 (NRSV) For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

I learned this Bible verse when I was in summer vacation Bible camp. It touches my heart while I am with close friends and family.

Dear Lord, thank you for this Bible verse that you taught me. Amen.

Saturday, March 16, 2019

John 15:7 (NLV) If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

When I first came to prison, I was scared, lonely, and lost. I didn't know what to do or where to turn. I had never been in trouble with the law before. Luckily, I had the support of my family and best friend. He shared with me this Bible verse in one of his daily letters he wrote to me. He's a devoted Christian and yet he took time out of his daily schedule to write to me and encourage me to talk with God. As I walked the track, I began to pray and talk with God. My friend taught me to visualize walking with him and being one with the Spirit. I asked God to help comfort me and take away my fears. As I did this, I became a more enlightened and spiritual person. I felt freer by turning my life over to him. I knew whatever happened, it was because of him, and how he entered and impacted my life. I'm forever grateful because without coming to prison, I would never have renewed my faith in him. It reinforced the fact that he is with me and can be with you always – just ask.

Dear Heavenly Father, please be with everyone that's behind bars and send them your Holy Spirit to protect them. Thank you for our dear family and friends and those that encourage us in our faith. Amen.

Monday, March 18, 2019

1 Peter 1:6-9 (ESV) In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith – more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire – may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Throughout my life, I've felt like I didn't quite belong, or that there was something off with me. It seemed the more I tried to do good, I did bad, or not good enough. I strived to be what everyone else wanted me to be and felt I just always came up short. At times my heart grew weary and I felt like giving up, but something kept pushing me forward. Then, other times, I, due to devastating lack of direction and self-esteem, became angry and frustrated with the world, and acted out, rebelled – and to be perfectly honest, lived my life to spite those who believed in me who had hoped for more in my life. I continued in this way for a good 35 years. The world, I thought, was either at my mercy or awfully mean to me. I had no inclination to take accountability for my actions. Until one fateful December I was arrested for a crime and put into county jail, most likely awaiting prison. While there I was taken under the wing by a congregation of God's disciples, his most obedient, gifted, and devoted servants who asked me to go on a journey. The journey was to know God, my God, his nature, that in which I believe and that which I do not. I gave myself completely to that which was asked of me. My journey has been beyond anything that I ever could have imagined. My God is kind, loving, gentle, and relentless. He came for me in the darkest place, at the absolute end of my rope. He broke my spirit. He illumined my heart and soul. He showed me the way home. Beside my beloved brother, Jesus Christ, I continue to walk, in love and with a faith unseen, but complete.

My Lord, call on those who have strayed and bring them home. As you did with me, let them know that their afflictions are felt worldwide and they are anything but alone. In their darkest corners you are there, shining your light. Help their eyes be opened to see your arms open in loving embrace. Amen.

Tuesday, March 19, 2019

Romans 8:1-4 (NLT) So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death. The law of Moses was unable to save us because of the weakness of our sinful nature. So God did what the law could not do. He sent his own Son in a body like the bodies we sinners have. And in that body God declared an end to sin's control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins. He did this so that the just requirement of the law would be fully satisfied for us, who no longer follow our sinful nature but instead follow the Spirit.

The phrase, "I am with you always," has played out in my life in that I was first taught by someone who was well-versed in scripture, and also I attended Teen Challenge for two months. This saying means to me that Jesus is always ready to help, teach, pray and fast for any reason he would find to help others. Our inner spirit resembles Jesus' which connects us to him and him to us. I've known that to be true by seeing and experiencing the power of prayer and the way God has helped me to help others. I have sometimes doubted. However, scripture is what rejuvenated my mind and helps me stay the course.

Thank you, Lord, for teaching us how to live properly under your care and love. We truly appreciate the gifts you bestow unto us as we live and learn. Again, thank you! Amen.

Wednesday, March 20, 2019

Psalm 23 (Please read or recite on your own.)

"I am with you always." This promise is true. Through your ups and downs, I will always love you. He gives me a comforter when my life is a mess, leads me by still waters and puts my heart to rest. Even though there are times I get conformed to the world, his goodness and love build my faith, and his hand is near. He is my rock when the world says I'm through. Truly forgiveness is a promise he gives to you. I will fear no evil. My paths are guided. I'm glad to call you Abba, Father. In Jesus Christ I'm delighted.

Thank you, Lord, for your touch. Give Edith a super natural healing. Amen.

Thursday, March 21, 2019

Isaiah 43:5-7 (NRSV) Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you; I will say to the north, "Give them up," and to the south, "Do not withhold; bring my sons from far away and my daughters from the end of the earth – everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."

During this long time in prison there was a time when I hadn't seen or heard anything about my three children and I felt very alone. I would pray for my children and ask Jesus to please just let me know that they are OK and being taken care of. Well, I kept the faith and I kept praying. One day when I had to go back to court, I got the answer to my prayers. Jesus had not only been with me, but also with my children. They looked happy, healthy, and all grown up into great adults. Jesus has always been there and when I start feeling alone, he reminds me of all the examples of how he is and has been there in the past. He shows me all the blessings. All the answers to those prayers he has worked out to his glory. Jesus is a restorer of families who trust in him.

Lord, thank you for always being with me. Thank you for your guiding hands in my children's lives and that you always are there for a mother's lonely heart. May all our children be in your hands and let them know they are not alone. You are a faithful Lord and to you I give all the praise and the glory. Amen.

Friday, March 22, 2019.

1 Peter 4:19(NLT) So if you are suffering in a manner that pleases God, keep on doing what is right, and trust your lives to the God who created you, for he will never fail you.

1 Peter 4:8(NLT) Most important of all, continue to show deep love for each other, for love covers a multitude of sins.

Christ is with me. I have a warm feeling come to me when I have a quiet Bible study in the morning. He tells me to love everyone like he loves us. Also, he says to enjoy life and leave your troubles with him. I know in my heart Jesus is with me when you have small blessings come your way. I get that warm feeling inside me when I recognize these blessings. I thank him over and over. I heard that it's God's will when you pray for his help and be patient and he will surely answer.

I pray that I can be home for Christmas. Amen.

Saturday, March 23, 2019

Proverbs 12:9 (NIV) Better to be a nobody and yet have a servant than pretend to be somebody and have no food.

Pretty much at the end of the day never change or try to be anybody but yourself; therefore, those who follow or love you will continue to follow. It means in general aspect you're a leader with a meaning and soldiers to pass it down to. This is better than trying to be somebody you're not and hitting dead ends for not finding your correct path from God/Jesus! I love you all!

Thank you, God for teaching us to be good leaders. Amen.

Monday, March 25, 2019

1 Chronicles 16:11 (NRSV) Seek the LORD AND HIS STRENGTH, seek his presence continually. Psalm 16:8 (NRSV) I keep the LORD ALWAYS BEFORE ME; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

Also Acts 13:35-37; Matthew 28:18-20; Philippians 4:4

King David tells us to look to the Lord and then proclaims that he will always set the Lord before him. Both Peter and Paul understood the 16th Psalm as a prophesying Yeshua's resurrection. The book of Matthew ends with our assigned topic. Yeshua tells the 11 disciples (and me), "Surely I am with you always to the very end of the age." How awesome is that? Yeshua tells me he is always with me! It is very comforting that the Lord our God, King of the Universe is with me always. But, since I've been so blessed, I must use this heavenly blessing. In verses 18 and 19 I am told what to do with the power I receive with the never-ending divine presence of Yeshua. I am to make disciples of all nations – everyone – baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have been shown. In Philippians, Paul reminds me that I am always blessed and I should always rejoice. This is often a challenge as I make my way through my life in prison. When I take these challenges to my Lord in prayer, I'm reminded of all my friends I've met through PCA and St. Dysmas and all the men and women who come to prison every week to worship with the broken and redeemed.

Blessed Savior, I lift up all your saints that support prison ministries. I know like you, your saints are always there to lift me up in prayer and support of St. Dysmas. Adonai bless you all! Amen.

Tuesday, March 26, 2019

Isaiah 41:10 (NRSV) So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will lift you up with my victorious right hand.

I remember thinking of this scripture when I was in court for my sentencing. It really calmed me to know God was with me. After I was put in county jail, I surrendered my life to Jesus. I carried this message with me to prison. I could feel God's love right away. I was able to find a job as a mentor shortly after arriving there. I also was allowed to attend several Bible studies and get into the prison church. Now I am able to share God's love with others in my daily walk with him. I have been able to get much closer to God in the past 13 months. I know God allowed me to go to prison to start over and become a new creation.

Dear Lord, thank you for all your blessings. God bless everyone whose hope is in the Lord. Amen.

Wednesday, March 27, 2019

Ephesians 6: 10-18(NRSV) Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints.

I realize that I can't do this by myself. Life is scary and uncertain. I need Jesus with me. Jesus is my armor and my protection and I rely always on him.

Dear Lord, I ask thee for your remembrance to put on the body of armor every morning. I thank thee for your armor and your promise to protect me. Amen.

Thursday, March 28, 2019

Matthew 28:19-20 (NRSV) Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

“I am with you always” – what a great phrase. At age 14 I was saved and saw the Holy Spirit in action, as many souls were given to the Lord. By 18, I had had enough with “church” and turned towards alcohol and by 25 I was a full-fledged alcoholic. Even when I turned my back on religion, I knew I was sinning, but more or less turned away from Christ. One dark night just past New Year’s, I was locked up and given 22 years on a manslaughter charge. I may have left Christ, but Christ did not leave me. The Bible says that even when we are sinning, Christ will always be with us.

Dear Lord, I want to thank you for always being with me even when I don’t deserve it. Thank you for your grace. Amen.

Friday, March 29, 2019.

Psalm 23:4 (NRSV) Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff – they comfort me.

This phrase, “I am with you always,” I struggle with. I do have an issue with trust and that includes Jesus. I have to always remind myself that he is with me always. There have been times in my life that I have doubted that he is with me. In times of suffering I question his presence, but then I get through my struggles and have always learned something very important. I then know he was there. Some things I don’t feel I could have gotten through without him. He always shows me in some way that he will never leave me. It’s been tough at times, but each day I gain more trust and faith.

Dear Lord, I thank you for always walking with me, carrying me at times. Whatever it takes, you never leave me. I love you. Amen.

Saturday, March 30, 2019

Psalm 118:21 I will praise you for you have answered me and have become my salvation.

I have only just come back to the Lord in 2016 when I came to prison for the first time, and then upon my release, after about seven months I fell away again and returned to prison in May 2018. It has taken some time for me to come to church, since it is now July, but for some reason this time is different. I pray every day for him to reveal himself to me and to help me surrender my heart, mind, and soul to him. Every time I walk in this church, in the last couple of weeks he had shown me he is with me. Today before I came to church my roommate and I were doing our daily devotional like we do every day, and I looked at her and said, "I think that you are my missionary - my messenger - to lead me back to him." When we got to church today, that's what part of the lesson was about - how we are all missionaries. I truly, wholeheartedly, know he is always with me and I have no doubts.

Lord, thank you for my earthly angels and messengers you sent to guide me home. Amen.

Monday, April 1, 2019

Matthew 4:4 (NKJV) But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'

God is in my heart. I hear the scriptures through SFACC (St. Francis of Assisi Christian Church). This brings hope to my heart. Being behind locked doors is so hard. Coming to church makes me feel better. God is with me. Listening to scriptures helps me focus for the week, and keeps me happy during difficult days.

Thank you, Lord, for the gift of my congregation. Amen.

Tuesday, April 2, 2019

Matthew 27:33-37(NRSV) And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall; but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. And when they had crucified him, they divided his clothes among themselves by casting lots;^[a] then they sat down there and kept watch over him. Over his head they put the charge against him, which read, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews."

No matter what happens or where you go, Jesus is always there. And even on the cross or your death bed, if you ask for forgiveness, you will be saved.

I pray for peace on earth. Amen.

Wednesday, April 3, 2019

Matthew 22:19-21(NRSV) Show me the coin used for the tax." And they brought him a denarius. Then he said to them, "Whose head is this, and whose title?" They answered, "The emperor's." Then he said to them, "Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's."

The head wants what the head wants, but the heart wants what the heart wants. Though our heads sometimes lead us away from God, our hearts bring us back. This is because promises are from the heart and not from the head.

Dear Lord, thank you for always keeping your promises. Amen.

Thursday, April 4, 2019

1 Corinthians 13:13 (NRSV) And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

We are not the judge. We need to love one another and rid all hate. We are all children of God. We are brothers and sisters and we need to love one another. Jesus is with us no matter what we have done, or sinned. He is a forgiving God and we can call upon him at any time, in any place, about anything.

God, please watch over all of your creation and help us to be more like you and fill each and every one with love. Amen.

Friday, April 5, 2019

Jeremiah 29:11 (NRSV) For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.

God's Perfect Plan

God knows the plans he has for us.
We must not complain or even fuss.
He will prosper us and do us no harm.
We are eternally safe in his loving arms.
He will also give us a future and hope.
Pulling us up by his strengthened rope.
He loves us dearly and will forever see
For us to walk to him faithfully.

*Lord, shine your light on this lonely man.
The light I receive is from God's perfect plan. Amen.*

Saturday, April 6, 2019

Philippines 4:13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

I was very claustrophobic. My fear of an MRI machine was real. I was told I had to do it without any drugs. In the past, I was always heavily medicated. If I didn't do it this time, I would have to wait six months to have it done at the hospital. That meant six more months of extreme back pain. I felt that this was another one of the pieces of my life I need to give to the Lord. I went in repeating this scripture over and over and soon I felt the Lord holding me. Today I know that he is always there and allows me his strength whenever I have fear.

Dear Lord, let me always rely on you and your strength. You are always faithful and true. In Jesus name, Amen.

Monday, April 8, 2019

John 15:5 (NRSV) I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.

Christ abides in me as I abide in him. To abide is to remain. This creates an intimate relationship of love. Christ is my closest friend. I seek him in prayer, thought, spirit, and heart. In faith Christ dwells in me, keeping me rooted, grounded, and filled in his love and knowledge. He is with me always. My relationship in Christ is built on the rock-solid foundation of his promises throughout his Word. My identity is found in Christ as he continually works out every purpose of my life while he guides, directs and leads me. I remain confident in Christ for I feel his presence as he surrounds me in peace, love, and joy. I am captured by his grace to live a God-centered life that others might desire to follow Jesus, the risen Christ. I have learned to be still as I wait for his guidance and direction, doing my best whether I feel inspired or not. I am taught by Psalm 139 that I can rest in his assurance, for he is with me no matter where I go. I am in his grip, his arms around me, his strength carries me. He is alive in me as I am alive in him. His word active - showing me the path to walk on. I must follow. He calls me friend.

May the faithful love of Christ continue to dwell in each of us, that our hearts reveal us to be trustworthy, encouraging and loyal, remaining true to the one living God, Jesus ad Savior. In Christ's holy name, Amen.

Tuesday, April 9, 2019

Psalm 23: 1-6 (NRSV) The LORD IS MY SHEPHERD, I SHALL NOT WANT. He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul. He leads me in right path for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff – they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD my whole life long.

I had a new born baby girl, my Bella Boo, and my promise was that my little girl would never be taken from me. Then I went to jail and she was gone. My heart was broken. I wanted to go to sleep and never wake up, but God had other plans for me. He helped me, he carried me, and he rebuilt my heart with a bigger, better foundation. My heart is now healing with the help of our Lord. I can smile again. I can see again. I can help others again. Thank you, Lord, for helping me. Now I am born again.

I pray for all the broken hearts that the Lord will pick you up and heal your heart, so you can help others just like he did for me. Amen.

Wednesday, April 10, 2019

Ecclesiastes 3:3-4 (NRSV) ...a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance...

Before God, I was an addict. I used meth every day. It took my life, and it took me away from my family and kids. God has a time for everything – these verses from Ecclesiastes mean a lot to me. Being out there in the madness, I ended up getting shot and ended up with an infection through my whole body. One year later, I found out that I had stomach cancer. I fought it for two and a half years and danced on my Xbox the whole time to keep me strong. Even though I still was in active addiction, I never gave up. But now that I am sober and healthy again, God showed me that I want to go back to school for business so I can have my own dance studio. I am ready to dance for God and praise him for all the good he has done for me in my life. I am so grateful God has given me many chances, and gave me another season to dance.

Dear God, thank you for giving your life for our sins. Thank you for forgiving me for my sins. Thank you for allowing me to decide to get baptized. Thank you for me being healthy again and being able to walk again. Thank you for me being in my family's life again and them loving me unconditionally. Thank you for me being grateful for all the little things today. Thank you for me loving myself today, and thank you for waking me up sober. In Jesus name, Amen.

Thursday, April 11, 2019

James 5: 13-19 (NKJV) Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.

I look around every day, not just inside this gated community I currently reside in, but as well as the gated communities on the upper eastsides of the valleys across the nations. Kids everywhere are going hungry, kids being taken from their parents, sold into slavery, and sex operations, kids killing kids, all the while I'm surrounded by the most beautiful women in Christ. I lift my arms up in worship every day to my Lord and Savior for giving me another chance, for saving my life, and putting me back here in "my gated community." I'm free behind my bars, knowing my Lord is always with me, helping me to minister to others still suffering, who may not know the Lord, Jesus Christ, or who has yet to be saved.

Lord, today please further touch the heart of one brother and sister so they may seek your face and turn from their life of sinful ways. I say these things in my Lord's name, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Friday, April 12, 2019

Philippians 4:13 I can do anything through Christ who gives me strength.

There are times, many times in my life when I feel down or lost, depressed even, when I think, "Who cares?" This is one verse that most lifts me up. This verse keeps me strong knowing he is with me and he will be there in the end. That's his promise to me no matter what.

Lord, thank you for your promise to be with me always. Amen.

Saturday, April 13, 2019

Psalm 118: 5-8 In my anguish I cried to the Lord, and he answered by setting me free. The Lord is with me. I will not be afraid. What can man do to me? The Lord is with me; he is my helper. I will look in triumph on my enemies. It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man.

I can't tell you how many times I have read these verses whether in daily devotionals or just in scripture reading. I had never known them before on the outside, but now they are instilled in me and bring comfort to me when I read them or remember them. Whatever the circumstances, I know God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are with me always. In the good times, which we sometimes take for granted, and also in the bad, which a lot of peoples can't imagine God being there, they are always there. As with Joseph and his brothers in Genesis 50, Joseph reassures his brothers that what they intended as harm, God intended it for good to accomplish what needed to be done – the saving of many lives. Glory be to God!

Heavenly Father, Lord Jesus, and Holy Spirit, help us to recognize your presence in our lives – in the good and bad times – that we might give you praise for all you do even though we can't fully see your great plan. Glory and praise to you in the highest. Amen.

Monday, April 15, 2019

Romans 8:38-39 (NRSV) For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Nothing can separate us from God's love. There is a promise that will keep Jesus in our heart and give us strength to keep our Lord and Savior in our prayers and spread his word to everyone we meet in this path of our life.

Lord, thank you for promising never to leave us. Amen.

Tuesday, April 16, 2019

Matthew 28:18-20(NKJV) And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

In tough days, remember that the Lord God is always with you because he loves us unconditionally. He shows us that we are never alone and we can turn to him, and ask for his help on our walk. So never give up on the Lord because he says, "I am always with you."

Lord Jesus, help me to stay focused on you and to not go off the path you have set for me. Amen.

Wednesday, April 17, 2019

Romans 10:9-13 (NRSV) ...because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved. The scripture says, "No one who believes in him will be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. For, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Also Romans 8: 38-39

To be a Christian has not been easy. I grew up not knowing Jesus and the idea of God didn't bring any warm feelings. In fact, I truly never felt I'd be "good" enough to receive God's love. My mother suffered addiction and really fell deep when my little five-year-old brother was in a terrible accident and passed in her arms. Many years and broken promises from my mother went on and on. In 2001 she was arrested and put in jail for a DUI. She met an amazing volunteer named Sandy, who introduced my mother to Jesus. My mom called me and told me she was saved by Jesus and would not be drinking or drugging any longer. I did not believe her and honestly thought she was crazy. She was released from jail and could not drive, so guess who got to drive her to Sandy's Bible studies? At first I sat there with my arms folded thinking, "Yea, right, this God could never love me. You know what I've done?" Sandy began to tell me about a loving God that would forgive me. I just needed to believe in Jesus and accept him as my Lord and Savior and that he'd forgive and save me. So, I did – that summer I was saved. I was 21 years old with five children and finally felt true love for the first time. I'm now 38 years old and have buried two children, my 56-year-old mother, my grandmother and many other close loved ones. Without my love for Jesus, I believe this all would have been too much, but I have a hope and know we serve a loving God who promises through it all to never leave you or forsake you. He hasn't me, even in the depths of my deepest pain, his love remains faithful.

Jesus, help people everywhere to know your love. Amen.

Maundy Thursday, April 18, 2019

Hebrews 13:5 (NASB) Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for he Himself has said, I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you."

Every day is a struggle, and when you're not content it is worse. I am not saying that contentment makes butterflies fly and flowers blossom. When you think your life is a lemon, make what? Lemonade, is what we're told. If you keep to the promises, God will be faithful; will you? So today, maybe you want to give up. Do not! Maybe you're out of coffee and you got a report for asking a friend for a shot of coffee. It happens. Sometimes we hurt; sometimes we go without; and sometimes we have the best. Remember God is God! Life is a rollercoaster ride, so in your ups, downs and in the middles, he is still there. Let the Lord be God to you today and he will not forsake you in any way!

Sometimes, I do not know where you are. I know I need you and I want to feel you, but when I cannot, I trust you. I trust that you will not forsake me, and I will be content in you. In Jesus name, Amen.

Good Friday, April 19, 2019

Matthew 27:46 (NRSV) And about three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

I'm tired of this lifestyle I've been living!

Help me, Lord. Amen

Easter Vigil, Saturday, April 20, 2019

Esther 4:14b (NRSV) Who knows? Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this.

I have all these thoughts that race through my head telling me that I am never going to be good enough and that everyone around me would be better off if I was dead. Come to find out these were all just lies the devil had told. You see, my soul was already paid for in full by God, so it couldn't be sold. So every time I am having a bad day and feel like I am dying inside, I just have to dig real deep into my soul where the Holy Spirit resides. Even when situations occur in my life and I start to go astray, I just need to always remember to hit my knees and pray for his guidance, strength, and courage to be of maximum service to him and others and never forget to lift up all my sisters as well as my brothers. He told me that long ago, my sins were already paid for, too, so I am covered by his grace and mercy. Just believe in him, have faith and trust him – that's all I had to do. Just like the book of Esther, it is my turn to stand up for what I believe in. It is my time and one day when he calls me home, I will be with him, in his heavenly, divine world.

You are a loving, merciful God – forgiving, tender, kind and sweet. Help us to seek you in all that we do so that your light will shine through us to your world. Amen

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