

Thursday, July 9

Reading: Genesis 24:44 *“if she says to me, “Drink and I will draw for your camels also” – let her be the woman whom the Lord has appointed for my master’s son.”*

Thought: There are some who criticize the Bible as being patriarchal and male centered. I would tell them, “Look again, and read carefully” for there are great stories of many women in the Bible and this is one of them. Genesis 24 introduces us to Rebekah, who was chosen by God to be the ancestor of the Hebrew people just as her husband Isaac was. Abraham had sent a servant to find a wife for his son Isaac. The servant asked God for a sign to show him which woman was to be chosen – whoever offered to water his camels would be the one. The sign he asked for was quite extravagant, for each camel could drink 200 liters (53 gallons) and there were 10 of them. This means Rebekah offered to draw about 175 pails of water for a total stranger, just because he asked for a drink! Rebekah was certainly a strong and generous woman, worthy of our respect and honor, just as her husband Isaac is. What other women in the Bible do you admire? Are there women in your life that you admire too?

Prayer: Holy Spirit - help me to read the Bible with many layers of understanding.

Friday, July 11

Reading: Psalm 45:10-11 *“Listen oh daughter, consider and give ear: forget your people and your father’s house. The king is enthralled by your beauty, honor him for he is your lord.*

Thought: The Bible was written long ago for specific purposes, yet the wonder of the Bible is that we can find meaning in each verse for ourselves right now. This verse was written for the wedding of a king, yet I find it has personal meaning. It tells me I am called to honor God for he is my King and my Lord. I also believe it tells me that God sees me as a beautiful daughter. I am told (and believe) that I am a cherished child of God, and since God is the King, I am a princess. Well, at least in the eyes of God I am a princess, and what a wonderful thought that is. Sometimes I really need to remember that. Do you find personal and timely meaning in the Bible? Do you find a different meaning in this verse?

Prayer: Mighty God – you are my sovereign Lord, high and mighty above everything, yet in love with me. How grateful am I for your love and esteem!

Saturday, July 11

Reading: Song of Solomon 2:13 *“The fig tree forms its early fruit, the blossoming vines spread their fragrance. Arise, come my darling, my beautiful one, come with me.”*

Thought: Another declaration of love – this one from the Song of Solomon. We often skip over this book in the Bible. It does seem to be a little out of place, being a love song appearing right after the words of wisdom held in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes and before the words of the prophets Isaiah. Oh – the Bible does speak in surprising ways, including this book of love and it speaks to me in personal ways. Many of you already know that I am a gardener, and I find God in my garden. On sunny summer days I love to wake up early in the morning, see the sun rising and listen to the birds. I hear God’s words of love calling me out to our garden to greet the day.

What a way to start the day! Where do you hear God's voice calling you to meet him? How does that feel?

Prayer: Holy Spirit – call me to you, fill me with your true life, and make me feel beautiful in every way.

Sunday July 12

Reading: Zechariah 9:9 *“Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey.”*

Thought: This single verse strikes me in three completely different ways. Of course, the traditional view is that of the prophecy of Jesus riding into Jerusalem on the donkey on Palm Sunday, but there are two more things that stand out for me. First of all, once again, anyone who says the Bible was written only for men has never read it from a purely female standpoint. The great city of Jerusalem, also known as Zion, and the center of religious life and the promised land is seen as a woman, valued, and loved. It also shows one of the great themes of the Bible, which is that of contradiction – our king is triumphant and victorious, but also humble, not proud, or arrogant, or conceited. What other ways does this verse strike you? Do you feel valued and loved by God?

Prayer: Jesus – you are everything. Help us to be like you – triumphant and victorious over hatred and sin and death, yet humble and unpretentious in our humanity

Monday, July 13

Reading: Psalm 145:8 *“The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.”*

Thought: This is one of my favorite Bible verses of all time. It gives me great hope and comfort, for, like all humans, am imperfect, wilful, and disobedient. How fortunate and blessed am I that God is gracious and merciful. How I treasure that abounding and steadfast love that satisfies and comforts like nothing else. What is your favorite Bible verse? Why is it your favorite?

Prayer: Gracious and Merciful God – thank you for your abounding and steadfast love.

Tuesday, July 14

Reading: Romans 7:15 *“I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but what I hate.”*

Thought: And here is one of the great reasons why yesterday's verse is such a favorite of mine. Like Paul, I often do what I know is wrong and hateful. I hate to admit it, but sometimes on occasion I even sin on purpose. I may not plan on being sinful, but that doesn't change the fact that I make bad decisions. I get tired, impatient, hungry, frustrated and my human nature overrides my desire to follow Jesus' example. I look back over my day and ask “Why on earth did I do THAT? It gives me comfort to know that even Paul – one of the apostles – had the same issue. Knowing that I can move forward, repent of my actions, and receive the forgiveness I so urgently need. What causes you to fall short of following Jesus? Have you asked God to forgive you?

Prayer: Friend Jesus – walk with me and help me always act as you would. Forgive me when I falter and give me courage to try again

Wednesday, July 15

Reading: Matthew 11:19 *“the Son of Man came eating and drinking and they say, ‘Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.”*

Thought: Once again, we find a lot of information and wisdom piled into a single verse. Here we have evidence that Jesus was truly human – he ate and drank just as we do. Then there is the hope this verse provides. Jesus is a friend to us as sinners. How fortunate are we! Not only that, we also see wisdom personified as female. Finally, in that last sentence we hear an echo of the verse from July 4, giving confirmation that we are to judge advice that leads us to action by the result. What other meanings do you find in this verse? Do you see Jesus as your friend?

Prayer: All-seeing God – guide me to the multiple meanings contained in your holy Bible.