



Sunday 24 May to Sunday 31 May



Sunday 24 May 2020

Abundant living

by Jane Mueller

'God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work' (2 Corinthians 9:8).

Read 2 Corinthians 9:6–15

Where doubt exists, faith does not. And without faith, the abundant blessings of God become hard to see and grasp.

God doesn't say, 'I'll occasionally fight for you', 'You'll probably prosper', 'My favour is intermittent', 'I'll consider renewing your mind and strength' or 'Today you might be in paradise with me'. Our God doesn't mince words. Rather, he speaks with authority, clarity and promise.

Sometimes we operate from a mindset of doubt, deficiency or fear. When we break free from this and instead adopt a mindset of expectation, abundance and optimism, our eyes are opened to God's overflowing vastness, limitless provision and unspeakable joy. Difficulties and obstacles crumble and vanish when we are sure of the things we hope for and certain of the things we cannot see.

Faith doesn't ignore reality. Quite the opposite, faith knows we will suffer and experience difficult challenges. But faith also knows Jesus has overcome the grave and defeated the world. Faith transports us to a new reality – one that walks in step with Jesus where perfect love drives out fear, making way for abundant living.

A mindset of expectation, abundance and optimism is not reserved for the most theologically astute. It's a mindset that exists for all. So how can you embrace it? Live in thankfulness, knowing the peace of God guards your heart and mind in Christ Jesus. Live in love, knowing that when you live in love, you live in God, and God lives in you. Live in grace, knowing you are alive in Christ and have been saved through faith. Live in fullness, knowing Jesus came so that you would have life and have it in abundance.

And rest assured you need not do any of this under your own strength. God works within you by the power of his Spirit.

God Almighty: all things originate with you and we know you work within us to bring them to fruition. All glory be yours.

Jesus, Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End: you are our all-sufficient, abundant Lord who will not fail to complete the good work you have begun in us. We give you thanks and praise.

Holy Spirit: breathe over us and inspire us to live by faith and not by sight. We rest in your advocacy. Amen.

Monday 25 May 2020

Rejoice always

by Pastor Glenn Crouch

'Though the fig tree does not blossom ... yet will I rejoice in the Lord' (Habakkuk 3:17-18).

Read Habakkuk 3:16-19

We often tie 'rejoicing' to when things go very well for us. We rejoice when we have a bumper harvest; when our child achieves one of his/her goals; when the weekend arrives; even when we get a good parking space. While we should indeed praise our gracious Lord for the many blessings he supplies, each and every day, we often fall into the trap of only praising him when things go well.

The prophet in this passage writes a beautiful song that is basically saying: 'Even if everything goes wrong, and I end up without any job, not knowing where my next meal is coming from, or how I pay this week's bills, I will still praise the Lord!' He knows that the Lord is his Saviour. He knows that while the world around him is falling apart, our Sovereign Lord is in charge. Justice will prevail. God will come and set the world aright!

We know that God did come, as one of us, in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, and lived, suffered and died for all of us and that our Father raised him on that glorious Sunday morning. What the prophet looked forward to, we remember. We rejoice in what God has already done for us. We rejoice that we are daughters and sons of the most high; brothers and sisters of our Lord and Saviour – not through what we have done but through his death and resurrection.

It is not because we enjoy hardship, that we rejoice – but because we focus on the cross and what was done for us. Rejoice! God loves you so much that he sent his only Son to die for you!

Gracious Father, I don't like the way the world is currently. I miss so much. Help me to trust in you. Fill me afresh with your Holy Spirit, so that I might be like the prophet and rejoice in these difficult times. In Jesus' precious name, Amen.

Tuesday 26 May 2020

Walk humbly

by Maria Rudolph

'He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God' (Micah 6:8).

Read Micah 6:3-8

Following God is as simple as it gets and as difficult as it gets. When we walk with God and want to do it justice, nothing is required of us. We receive God's grace and forgiveness freely as a gift, totally undeserved. We are not forced to read our Bibles, go to church, talk to God in prayer, give thanks for our food and other necessities.

Yet, if we think about it, everything is required of us when we follow God. How does God want us to worship him? No outward sign of our devotion would ever be enough. God knows our heart and he looks straight into the depths of our soul and knows what's there.

What does God require? He desires a heart devoted to him above all else. A heart and mind full of God is naturally drawn to expressions of devotion to God. It desires to read the Bible; it wants to communicate with God in prayer and meet with other believers in worship at church. A heart set on God is humble and seeks justice and kindness in his name.

Will you walk humbly with your God today?

Loving Father, teach me your way of humbly walking with you. Give me a heart set on you above all else, a heart overflowing with love for my neighbours and the people who cross my path each day. Open my eyes to see the opportunities you set before me to share your love with them. Let me be your eyes, your feet, your mouthpiece in this world, and let this be my true act of worship and devotion to you. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Wednesday 27 May 2020

Love is an anchor

by David Folker

'Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm' (Mark 4:38-39).

Read Mark 4:35-41

Uncertainty is a lot like a bustling wind. If we aren't grounded, we can be swept from side to side, even sent spiralling into ruin and despair.

I love the story of Jesus calming the storm. After spending a day ministering to others, he was exhausted, so much so that he slept through a fierce squall. The disciples, many of whom were seasoned fisherman, were no strangers to the rhythms of the weather. It must have been quite a storm to have sent these men of the sea into a flap!

I can picture them working with increasing fervour as the storm began to swell, the rising waves smashing into the boat. Perhaps it was close to capsizing. The noise of the winds would have been terrible. Somehow, Jesus slept through. And yet a single cry from his disciples immediately roused him. He stood against the storm and it could not help but obey his voice of command.

Are you being buffeted around in the current climate? Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2), will ground you. Upon uttering your cry for help, he will come into your crisis and bring calm.

Like an anchor.

Cling to his love for you. It is immovable. It will see you through the fiercest storm.

Dear Jesus, I thank you for your love for me. Hold on to me tightly; I can't see through this storm. But you can. Thank you that you will never leave me nor forsake me. Give me your peace, which surpasses all human understanding. Thank you, Lord. Amen.

Thursday 28 May

Singing from the wrong hymn sheet

by Rachael Stelzer

'And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself' (Luke 24:27).

Read Luke 24:13-35

My brother used to sing a song by Starship with the wrong lyrics. He thought the chorus said, 'We built this city on rocky road' – instead of 'rock and roll'.

Jesus' followers were constantly getting the lyrics wrong. He was singing to them about going to Jerusalem to die, and they heard that he was going to Jerusalem to spit in Rome's eye. He sang that he would rise after three days, and they heard that he was going to be Israel's new craze. He sang that they would all fall away and betray, and they heard that they would ride in to save the day. And even after he rose again, they still hung onto the old lyrics – but now they were singing the blues.

The day of his resurrection, Jesus showed up on a road and walked with a couple of his miserable disciples. They were trying to understand the events of the previous days. And Jesus had a shot at them. 'How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?' (Luke 24:25-26).

Either because of their grief or God's plan, they never realised that the one who was giving them the Bible study was the one it was about. But they heard. And then they saw him.

As they listened to the familiar lyrics, those words of blessing, from a voice they would never forget, bells began to ring in their minds, and as the pierced hands lifted the bread, their eyes widened. And they danced back to Jerusalem singing a new song.

What lyrics do you sing? Are you singing from a different hymn sheet to the One who created you? When he sings 'And I will love you, baby, always', do you hear 'I never really loved you anyway'? When his song is 'Be still and know that I am God', do hear 'I still haven't found what I'm looking for'?

Maybe it's time to listen to the God who rejoices over you with singing and sing the song you were made to sing.

Dear Lord, help us to be open to your word and your words in our life. Speak healing, forgiveness and hope into our hearts. Let us dance to your song. It is a song that will never end. Amen.

Friday 29 May 2020

Blooming

by Darren Pope

‘The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. It will burst into bloom; it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy’ (Isaiah 35:1-2).

[Read Isaiah 35](#)

Selfie sticks, picnic blankets and yummy snacks are standard equipment for the thousands of people who usually flock to Japan during spring. Emerging from slumber, a unique visual feast flourishes as Japanese cherry trees explode into a purple profusion and blossom en masse. Japanese families celebrate, attend cherry blossom festivals or simply enjoy *hanami*, the tradition of viewing and relishing the stunning simplicity of *sakura*, the cherry blossom. Long adored by people across the globe, this spectacular floral tapestry is regarded as a symbol of renewal, vitality, beauty and hope.

Chilly mornings and shorter days in the Southern Hemisphere mean we aren't embracing the beauty of spring blooms right now. Changing the seasonal quilt and wardrobe over helps us to prepare for a barren winter, snuggled up in a season of reflection, awaiting renewal, like Christ (Luke 4:1-2) preparing for his resurrection.

Jacaranda trees will soon wake from their wintery hiatus. The hills, parks and waterfronts will blossom, bursting into a symphony of splendiferous spring colour. Their purple majesty is spectacular and vibrant, bringing the assurance that life has come again – just as Jesus rose to new life! Dormant amid our season of stillness, we quietly anticipate the promise of vibrant spring colours yet to be unfurled. We lift our eyes to a future filled with hope, grace and peace. It's coming!

In Christ, we are blooming.

Lord of life. Thank you for the gift of your love each day. You have planted us to grow and serve with purpose. Help us to remain firmly rooted in hope through your resurrection. Help us be patient in these days as we await renewal. Help us to blossom and bloom. Amen.

Saturday 30 May 2020

God rejoices over you with singing

by Norma Koehne

'The Lord your God in your midst, The Mighty One, will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing' (Zephaniah 3:17).

Read Zephaniah 3:14–20

What an amazing image this is! God is rejoicing over us, rejoicing over us with singing! What a contrast to images many people have of a stern or distant God. It reminds me of that passage in Luke 15:10: 'There is joy in heaven over one sinner who repents'. I have always imagined the angels and saints rejoicing, but here God rejoices with gladness and song.

But how can God rejoice over me, with all my imperfections and lack of love? I am reminded of an illustration I once heard in a sermon. The pastor had young grandchildren and one of them had drawn him a picture. To look at it, it was just squiggly lines. So, he said, 'Tell me about your picture'. The child answered, 'This is you and me and we are holding hands'. The grandfather replied with tears in his eyes, 'That is a beautiful picture'.

Similarly, God looks at our frail faith and our feeble works of love, like squiggly lines, and he rejoices over us as a loving Father who has given all that he has, his only Son, for us. Not only does he see into our hearts, but he gives us his Holy Spirit to strengthen our faith and support us as we, in love and gratitude, try to do his will. When he looks on his beloved children, he sees them clothed with the righteousness of Christ. He is glad to call us his children and to hold us close in his family.

What an encouragement to us as we worship, immerse ourselves in God's word, pray, and perform acts of love. As we do these things, God is happy and rejoices over us. What a truly wonderful Father!

Loving Father, thank you that you look on us with gladness as we live our lives as your children, and in your service. Amen.

Sunday 31 May 2020

Time changes many things

by Pastor Reid Matthias

'But Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him' (Genesis 33:4).

Read Genesis 33:1-11

My sister, Danielle, is an emergency room nurse in Minneapolis, Minnesota. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Dani had to leave her three children with my parents to keep them safe during her long hours of taking care of sick patients in the ER. This separation was horrific for her, and the loneliness that assailed her was a heavy weight of darkness.

Six weeks into their necessary separation, my parents drove to meet Dani and decided to surprise her by bringing Dani's kids along. The excitement made the kids squirm in the back seat of the car. Unfortunately, my sister called and said that she'd be late – she had been struggling very badly.

Finally, when she arrived at the meeting place, she parked away from my parents' car, and as she approached, the kids' heads popped up from the back seat. Instantly, the ache of mother's love overtook Dani and she began to weep. To be separated from family is a very, very difficult thing.

If you were going to meet someone, who would you love to have pop up?

Would family, friends or neighbours with whom you'd disagreed come to mind?

In the text, Jacob never expected Esau to pop back up in his life. The way they had parted, Jacob deceiving Esau, taking both blessing and birthright, would have caused a rift between the brothers. Perhaps Jacob would have not wanted to see Esau.

But in the midst of reconnection, time had changed Esau for the better. Gone was the sibling rivalry and the need to impress parents (and even each other). What replaced it was a desperate desire to be reunited with his brother.

Maybe in this time of separation, isolation and loneliness, someone unexpected will pop back up into your life. Will time have changed them? You? Is this time a perfect one for reconciliation?

Heavenly Father, thank you for the opportunities you give to us to reconcile with our brothers and sisters. Help us to reconnect and find a common point again. Amen.