

So, too, we need to be prepared to meet our Lord Jesus by staying in touch with him daily through prayer, reading his word, and anticipating the joy that will come when we meet him face to face.

Deuteronomy 34:1-12; Psalms 20, 21; Romans 10:14-21

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Sunday, July 7

Psalm 147 *He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.* (v.3 NIV)

Life's journey is not a straight path but rather can be full of detours, roadblocks, and sometimes surprisingly beautiful and unexpected alternate routes. I know the pain of a heart broken by divorce and the peace that comes with healing, a process that has taken years. A broken heart can also result from the death of a spouse, the interruption of one's family as it was "supposed to be." Over the past couple years my life has changed dramatically with the reunion of a close childhood friend who is widowed. We are now planning a future together. From painful moments we each experienced, the Lord has brought a new creation, new hope, and love. Truly God is good, all the time, and all the time, God is good.

Numbers 27:12-23; Psalm 146; Acts 19:11-20; Mark 1:14-20

Monday, July 8

Romans 8:26-30 *In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.* (v.26)

What a gift to know the Holy Spirit intercedes for us. Prayer is a relationship with our Father and the desire to pray is a prayer in itself. God knows our needs and knows the needs of those who are on our hearts. There are times when we don't know what to say or pray for, but He does.

Recently our dear friend was diagnosed with a brain tumor, part of a metastatic process that is still being evaluated for proper treatment. Only a week before this sudden event, he and his wife called to invite us to dinner. How quickly life changes; it is precious and precarious. We are devastated for our friend and his family, their children, and for ourselves. How do we help them? What can we do from over 450 miles away?

Prayer is powerful and comforting and it works. It is the one thing we can do that is meaningful to our friend and also helps us in our desire to "do something" for him and his wife. We don't have the words, but our hearts are sincere in wanting to bring them healing, hope, and peace.

Our gift is lifting him up to the Lord, knowing He will do the rest. Thank You, Lord.

Numbers 32:1-6, 16-27; Psalms 1, 2, 3; Matthew 23:1-12

Tuesday, July 9

Romans 8:31-39 *For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels or demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.* (vv.38-39)

I was given a precious gift in my childhood, unconditional love from my parents, and the assurance and later knowledge that that I am loved by God, completely and totally. Paul's words in Romans are powerful and reassuring—nothing can separate us from the love of God. What an incredible gift as we think about this: no object or thing, no person, nothing can separate us from God's love.

God is always wooing us; He wants to be in relationship with us, His children. He doesn't change or move away, we do. We don't have to do anything to earn His love, it's already present for we were created out of His love. "God's love is one-way" as our priest often reminds us. Rest in this precious gift.

Numbers 35:1-3, 9-15, 30-34; Psalms 5, 6; Matthew 23:13-26

Wednesday, July 10

Romans 9:1-18 *It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy.* (v.16)

Referring to yesterday's reading, nothing can separate from the love of God. We don't have to be good enough to be loved. We are worthy. Our challenge is believing this.

It's easy to put ourselves down, to run and rerun the tape in our heads of our mistakes, the things we've said or done that we would like to take back, redo, do over. But we are asked to trust in God, believe in His unconditional love, His mercy. He sees us with the love a parent has for his child. Accept this gift.

Deuteronomy 1:1-18; Psalm 119:1-24; Matthew 23:27-39

Thursday, July 11

Psalms 18:1-20 *I love you, O LORD, my strength.* (v.1)

There are moments when my heart and soul are so full of love for the Lord. He has given us a beautiful world filled with things too awesome to describe with words. I've had several special times that I call "thin places" where heaven and earth seem to touch. It's overwhelming in the most wonderful, joyful way. I've felt pure joy, humility, and overwhelming love and gratitude. How can a person ever deserve all this? I see God

in my family, my children and grandchildren, my friends, my former patients, sweet babies, beautiful flowers and butterflies, and the love that has come to me in my later life. There are so many ways the Lord has blessed me. I do trust Him. I can look back over my life and see His hand in all the good and difficult places. He's always been there for me and with me. I can trust without fear or doubt that He will be with me always.

I love you, Lord. You truly are my strength.

Deuteronomy 3:18-28; Romans 9:19-33; Matthew 24:1-14

Friday, July 12

Romans 10:1-13 *For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”* (vv.12-13)

Travel opens our eyes. We see others who are different but can also see ourselves. There is not much difference in our basic needs for food, clothing, shelter, love, and relationships. In addition to visiting many places in the southeastern US this year, I've also been privileged to travel to the Czech Republic as well as Holland and Belgium. Although we have different accents and/or languages, foods, climates, and customs, it's powerful to see our similarities.

Let us look with God's eyes upon one another. He loves us all for He made us all. Call on the Lord and He will answer.

Deuteronomy 31:7-13, 24—32:4; Psalms 16, 17; Matthew 24:15-31

Saturday, July 13

Matthew 24:32-51 *“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”* (vv.42-44)

Be ready. Sudden loss gives us no time to prepare, say goodbye, say thank you, ask for or receive forgiveness. It can be haunting if there's "unfinished business." Many people get stuck in their grief when this happens. Through our church's healing ministry, I've learned the importance of forgiveness as well as the healing of memories. I was helped to visualize and pray about difficult events, allowing me to see that Jesus was there in those moments. He was present then as he is now. Receive his comfort, love, and peace.