

Christ, for us to make that choice. Then we are called “sons of God” and we can then call Him “Abba!”

Why are so many people ambivalent about making this choice? I think it’s from ignorance; they do not know the joy we have found in having God as our Father. It’s our duty to spread the word, to make them aware of this wonderful choice we have.

Numbers 24:1-13; Psalms 140, 142; Romans 8:12-17

Saturday, July 6

Matthew 22:23-40 “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” (vv.37, 40)

All law, all commandments, all of God’s wishes for us are to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, and mind. And “Love our neighbors as ourselves.” Everything we do should somehow be gauged against our love for God and our love for each other.

The first step is to develop that deep love of God, to worship Him, to seek Him, to listen and talk with Him, to always be in His presence. Aren’t these the things we want to do with the one we love?

What about our neighbors, our relationships with others; do we want the same? Often too many little prejudices, too little time, too much pride get in our way. Love someone today. Heal a broken relationship. Make an effort to approach someone today with a truly loving heart.

Make no assumptions that others “know” that you love them—take some action to show your love. Show your spouse and your children and your friends. Then, the world. The forgotten. The lonely. The elderly. The imprisoned. There’s plenty of opportunity!

Numbers 24:12-25; Psalms 137, 144; Romans 8:18-25

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Sunday, June 30

Psalm 118 *This is the day the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.* (v.24 NIV)

We are to be pipelines for God. We are to channel His love and His joy to others. As such, we are blessed.

It isn’t complicated. Our faith need only be a simple and real belief in God. We need only be open to Him and allow Him to use us. Do you remember the last time you made an effort to love someone—to do something to show that love—not for your sake but for their sake? Do you remember their response? I’m sure it felt good. Your effort to love them must have seemed effortless. Why? Is it because you had opened yourself to be God’s pipeline and He was there, ready to flow through you? Even in times of distress, He’s there. Even when it is you who needs His love and joy the most, He’s there.

As you become the pipeline for God, and as He flows through you out to others, return to God thanks and praise for His enduring love—“for he is good” (v.1).

Numbers 21:4-9, 21-35; Acts 17:22-34; Luke 13:10-17

Monday, July 1

Romans 6:12-23 *What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? By no means! Don’t you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience which leads to righteousness.* (vv.15-16)

The difficulty with this passage lies in the struggle of living a life in Christ and living a life in the world. In the world we are told to obey the laws of the world; in Christ, we are to obey the laws of God. Do the laws of God cancel out the laws of the world, making them meaningless for us? “Certainly not,” I hear Jesus say! So long as the laws of the world do not require one to disobey the laws of God, they must be obeyed. Law provides structure; law provides order.

I became the leader of an ecumenical group whose purpose is to build Christ through developing Christian leaders. Prior to my tenure the leaders of the group had lost sight of the need for order and structure. From this passage in Romans, they had come to a belief that no law and order was God’s plan, and that the “flow of the Spirit is all the order we need.” Jesus did not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it with God’s underlying purposes for the law, to give it “life.”

Sin and law are different. The law exposes sin. The passage really says not to become slaves to sin, but to use the law to identify sin and root it out.

Numbers 22:1-21; Psalm 106:1-18; Matthew 21:12-22

Tuesday, July 2

Matthew 21:23-32 *Jesus entered the temple courts, and, while he was teaching, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him. “By what authority are you doing these things?” they asked. “And who gave you this authority?”* (v.23)

We are having such a difficult time with authority in our society and in our church. Our respect for authority seems to be on the wane. It seems there is more lawlessness today, more divided homes, more truancy from our schools and our work than ever before. The church is divided over many issues, some of which are very defining. But are we really any different from those who preceded us?

In the Matthew passage for today we see the chief priests and elders questioning Jesus’ authority. I believe that most conflict over the ages has been caused by the questioning of authority. We resent the authority another has over us, or we lose respect for the person or the institution exercising that authority.

Jesus shows from whom real authority is ultimately derived: “John’s baptism—where did it come from? Was it from heaven, or from men?” (v.25). When we accept God as authority over all, everything stems from Him. All we do and all that is commanded of us to do, is to be measured by the authority of God. We know of His authority through our faith and relationship with Him.

Numbers 22:21-38; Psalms 120, 121, 122, 123; Romans 7:1-12

Wednesday, July 3

Romans 7:13-25 *I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.* (v.15)

The words of this passage are very telling for Christians. We, like Paul, can set our minds on something, commit to a change in our behavior that reflects the good of God, and try our hardest—but fail.

How many of us have looked back and said, “I will not behave like that again; I will change, starting right now!” And then, we find ourselves in the same situations, saying the same thing again. It’s hard for us to understand why we decide to act one way, and then act another, doing exactly what we don’t want to do. It was hard for Paul to understand. We know the law, but we just can’t keep it. Why? It’s that “other law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin” (v.23). We obviously cannot do it on our own, no matter how

strong our will may be. We need Jesus Christ. He has set us free from our inner war. Though we will never be perfect we can win the war when we trust in him.

Numbers 22:41—23:12; Psalm 119:145-176; Matthew 21:33-46

Thursday, July 4

Matthew 22:1-14 *“But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. Friend, he asked, ‘How did you get in here without wedding clothes?’ The man was speechless. Then the king told the attendants, ‘Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’”* (vv.11-13)

I was always troubled with the part of this passage in which the king responded to the one who came to the wedding banquet dressed “without a wedding garment” by “binding him hand and foot and casting him into the outer darkness.”

Seeing the king as God, and the invitation to the wedding banquet as His invitation to all, I couldn’t reconcile His discarding one for lack of proper credentials or appearance. It went against the faith as I understood it. It looked more like the earning of a ticket to His presence rather than His grace.

Then I looked at the wedding garment as being like a person’s faith in God. I see now that God invites us all, but that we must all come with sincere motive to confess to God and to put all of our trust and confidence in Him. We cannot masquerade that motive to God. Although God wants all people to come to Him, He is not concerned about numbers as such. He cares about whether our hearts are turned to Him.

Numbers 23:11-26; Psalms 131, 132, 133; Romans 8:1-11

Friday, July 5

Matthew 22:15-22 *“Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?”* (v.17)

If you could choose who your father would be, whom would you choose? Would it be Winston Churchill, Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Martin Luther? If I were able to choose my father, it would be—my father! My father is a Virginian, which is as much an adjective as it is a noun. He is somewhat stoic on the outside, yet warm and loving on the inside. He is caring and he is responsible. He is also dependable.

What about your spiritual father? If you could choose him, whom would it be? For me, it is our loving God. God is good in the purest sense. God gives us the option to choose Him. Can you imagine losing out on something so wonderful, so great and magnificent as that, simply by not making the choice? It only takes faith in what He did for us through His Son, Jesus