

It heals, it restores, and it promotes life. I am still searching for my old friend, to ask his forgiveness.

Esther 1:1-4, 10-19; Acts 17:1-15; John 12:36b-43

Birthdays: Terry Scheid, Quin Calkins, Jeri Gumbinner, Ryan Strom

Friday's Calendar

7:00 a.m. AA "Hour of Power"
9:00 a.m. A Way Out
9:30 a.m. Life Group
10:00 a.m. Bible Study
8:00 p.m. Friday Night Young Peoples' AA

Today's Ministry: Worship Assistant

Saturday, September 22

Esther 2:5-8, 15-23 *Now when the turn of Esther...came to go to the king, she did not request anything...* (v.15)

In today's reading, Esther was given the option to use adornments before presenting herself to the king. She chose to present herself just as she was. The king ultimately picked her to be queen.

Esther's simple act spoke volumes. It spoke of humility, sacrifice, forsaking control, exhibiting profound confidence while portraying absolutely none. In short, she was genuine. We instinctively know that God is the one person we cannot approach in pretense. It can be both the hardest and easiest thing to do.

Unlike Esther, Paul now tells us to "put on the new man." My struggle is how do I put on that new man without becoming a Pharisee? What do I do when that new man makes me feel enlightened, or superior? How do I remain, like Ester, genuine and unadorned before God?

I have only one choice but to cling to grace and the Spirit of Truth. For I am still just a Gentile, a son of a Muslim, and a gay man to boot who, like Ester, found grace in the eyes of another King.

Psalms 75, 76; Acts 17:16-34; John 12:44-50

Birthdays: Julie Buckley, Betsy Landry, Nikkii Turner, Cooper Freese

Saturday's Calendar

7:00 a.m. AA "Hour of Power"
9:30 a.m. AA Step Study for Women
11:00 a.m. Shahood Funeral
5:00 p.m. Holy Eucharist, Rite II

Today's Ministry: Youth Group

By *William Bacon*

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"Growing into Jesus - Reaching out with love"

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St. Mary's
EPISCOPAL CHURCH
Growing into Jesus - Reaching out with Love

Good News Daily

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Sunday, September 16

Job 38:1, 18-41 *"Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?"* (v.2 NAS)

A psychology professor once said, "Prejudice is to prejudge with insufficient evidence."

Having quoted my professor a thousand times in my life, you'd think I'd learned! Yet, as many times as I have quoted him, I have found myself guilty of this sin. I now conclude there is no cure for prejudice, only a life-long discipline.

I easily assume someone cutting in front of me in traffic is a jerk. Or, that my preferred news anchor has the story right. And I am sure I have, more often than not, jumped to the support of a friend who laments an injustice having only heard their side of the story. Never mind that jerk in traffic may have a choking baby in the back seat. Or, that my news anchor read half his copy. Or, that my dear friend overheard the wrong story.

Today's reading is both an admonition and a source of hope. It says to Job (and to me), after you have repented of your chronic assumptions, rip that tunnel vision.

Psalms 24, 29; Revelation 18:1-8; Matthew 5:21-26

Birthdays: Mardee Krueger

Sunday's Calendar

DISCRETIONARY SUNDAY
7:30 a.m. Holy Eucharist, Rite I
9:00 a.m. Contemporary Family Worship Service
10:30 a.m. Holy Eucharist, Rite II
Coffee Hour - Smith Hall after 10:30 A.M. Service

Today's Ministry: Table Toppers

Monday, September 17

Acts 15:36—16:5 *And there occurred such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another...* (v.39a)

In today's reading Paul proves he is human—twice. First, he fails to forgive John-Mark. Second, he retreats to circumcising a new convert. That priests, pastors, and apostles fail, make mistakes, or steer

off course is not the end of the world to me. If so, the world would have ended long ago. But it does test our faith.

In the early 80s I faced a religious institution suing a fellow Christian in court, then discriminating against Muslims while American televangelists promoted theme parks, hair styles, and money. It was all enough to create a 20-year divorce from me and the church. I'd had it. Not with God, but with the church.

Years later I recalled a wise pastor saying, "The church is going to disappoint you. I am going to disappoint you. But Christ won't, ever. There's a reason he is still around after 2,000 years." I soon concluded that there is no such thing as a perfect church but, more importantly, that a lonely life in pious exile was a far emptier way to live.

Job 40:1-24; Psalms 56, 57, 58; John 11:55—12:8

Birthdays: Marie Van Scoy, Stephen Roegiers, Sophia Saunders

Monday's Calendar

7:00 a.m. AA "Hour of Power"
4:00 p.m. DOK Meeting
5:30 p.m. ACA Families

Today's Ministry: Ushers

Tuesday, September 18

Psalm 62 *If riches increase, do not set your heart upon them.* (v.10b)

In today's reading, I'm left wondering if there is a difference between having wealth and possessing it. On the one hand we are promised blessings through our giving (Malachi 3:10). And yet, here, we are clearly warned not to "set your heart" upon them. A fine line, indeed.

In the 1981 comedy *Arthur*, Dudley Moore plays a chronic alcoholic who is heir to a family fortune. While plans are set for him to marry a local rich girl, he falls in love with a lower income thief played by a captivating Liza Minnelli. Ultimately, he faces a sobering choice between true love and fortune. He chooses love.

In mirroring divine jealousy, Christ once urged us not to fret over shelter and clothing but to "seek first the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you." Arthur ultimately got his inheritance, but not because he "set his heart" on it. On the contrary, it only came after he forfeited it first.

Job 40:1, 41:1-11; Psalm 61; Acts 16:6-15; John 12:9-19

Birthdays: Ben Norris

Anniversaries: Audley & Winsome Haynes, Flip Stevens & Sandy Banyard

Tuesday's Calendar

7:00 a.m. AA "Hour of Power"
12:10 p.m. Holy Eucharist & Healing
5:00 p.m. Facility Meeting
6:00 p.m. Overeaters' Anonymous

Today's Ministry: Vacation Bible School

Wednesday, September 19

Acts 16:16-24 *And she continued doing this for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed...* (v.18a)

In today's reading, Paul is annoyed by a fortune teller continually announcing to people the apostle's anointed arrival. Paul's annoyance eventually morphed to redemption.

In high school I recall a new student being rumored a warlock and casting spells on people. As a new convert, my righteous indignation meter went through the roof. But, just as quickly, calm prevailed and I found myself praying for this "warlock".

Weeks later our prayer group met miles away from our usual place. During the meeting, I walked the warlock. I later learned he lived next door. That night he awoke on his couch being molested by his stepfather. He fled—to our meeting next door. That night the young boy accepted Christ.

I have never viewed "wicked" people quite the same ever since, whether they are witches, terrorists, or psychopaths. How many times do we read Christ calming his own disciples' religious indignation? My high school warlock profoundly reminded me that Christ came "not to judge the world but to save it."

Job 42:1-17; Psalm 72; John 12:20-26

Birthdays: Michael Ferrera

Wednesday's Calendar

6:30 a.m. Men's Bible Study
7:00 a.m. AA "Hour of Power"
9:30 a.m. Holy Eucharist
10:00 a.m. Staff Meeting
1:00 p.m. Journaling 101
4:45 p.m. Mary's Kitchen
5:30 p.m. AA "Daily Reflections"
6:00 p.m. Life Groups
6:30 p.m. Alpha 4th Dinner and Class

Today's Ministry: The Vestry

Thursday, September 20

Job 28:1-28 *"But where can wisdom be found?"* (v.12a)

The two smartest people I have ever met in my life have one thing in common. They ask questions. I mean, like children—naïve and innocent. Ironically, unlike some less intelligent people I know who never ask questions because they seem to know everything!

The story of Job is that of a classic skeptic in which relentless miseries finally build a case for inner resentment, exhaustion, and cynicism. Later, through what appears a long, drawn-out epiphany, Job finally concludes wisdom can be found—in the fear of the Lord.

Job's epiphany reminds me of those two smart men I know and of Samuel Coleridge's "willing suspension of disbelief" that is characteristic in drama, but also in discovery.

When things go perpetually wrong for me, can I swallow my pride? Can I remain childlike amidst my anger? Can I forfeit my intellectual dignity to "the fear of the Lord" in order to find the wisdom I'm grasping for? Job, another smart man and one far more battered and bruised than I have yet to be, seemed to think so.

Psalms 70, 71; Acts 16:25-40; John 12:27-36a

Birthdays: Bob Kloppenborg, Jacki Nardone

Thursday's Calendar

7:00 a.m. AA "Hour of Power"
10:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist
4:00 p.m. Claribel Rivas Funeral
5:00 p.m. Warden's Meeting
5:30 p.m. ACA Men's Group
7:00 p.m. Choir Rehearsal
7:00 p.m. AI-Anon "Stepping Stones"

Today's Ministry: Wedding Guild

Friday, September 21

Psalm 69 *What I did not steal, I then have to restore.* (v.4c)

Ever co-sign a loan and then get stuck with it? During my prodigal-son years, I befriended someone who had more laughter in his DNA than anyone I knew. His family was the same. It was a good time in my life, initially. But, when he defaulted on a loan I co-signed, I was furious. To save my credit, I paid it off. When my friend did not repay the loan, I haunted his family and friends. When he moved I sent public court documents to potential employers, successfully ruining his reputation. Revenge began to steal my soul. I felt myself becoming ugly inside.

Victor Hugo's *Les Miserable* helped turn the tide for me. In those years I had forgotten about forgiveness, but could only lament my injustice like today's reading. Revenge is frightening. It is more powerful and wicked than I imagined. It destroyed my soul and my friendships. Christ's forgiveness, like the priest's in *Les Miserable*, is just the opposite.