


MONDAY, APRIL 10, 2023


VALUABLE TO GOD

 *READ: Matthew 13:44-46*

 _The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. – Matthew 13:44 (NIV)_

I used to think that I was not valuable to God. I would think to myself, I am not as good-looking as that person. I do not have any important skills. I am not good enough. Sometimes these thoughts started with something as simple as not being invited to an event and feeling rejected. Other times, I found myself brooding over painful words said to me or things done to me. Meditating on today's verse from Matthew helped me to see how the King of kings and God of the universe feels about me. In God's eyes I am a treasure who brings delight and joy. God believes we are worth giving up everything. So, as I think about Christ being born and dying on the cross, I now understand that sacrifice in light of this parable.

We understand how much something is worth by the price that has been paid. Jesus gave it all for me on the cross. Therefore, I can no longer go on living another day feeling like I do not count. I am learning to look at myself and say out loud, "I am valuable!"

 Prayer: Father, thank you for loving me and embracing me. Thank you for giving your all for me. Amen.

 Thought for the Day: I am special to God.

(Miss) Selina Machado (Blantyre, Malawi)


 PRAYER FOCUS: SOMEONE WITH LOW SELF-ESTEEM

This devotion is taken from The Upper Room devotional March-April 2023

TUESDAY, APRIL 11, 2023

FORGIVENESS IS ESSENTIAL


 *READ: Psalm 130:1-8*


 _If you, LORD, kept a record of sins, Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness, so that we can, with reverence, serve you. – Psalm 130:3-4 (NIV)_

I recently left a company I had been instrumental in building over the past decade. I was in a leadership role, so the choice to leave was difficult. I could not explain exactly what was wrong, but I knew things were changing. When I shared my concerns about where the company was headed, colleagues I once trusted turned their backs on me. I walked away, feeling broken and defeated.

The traditional stages of grief include denial, anger, and depression, followed by eventual acceptance. In Psalm 130, God makes it clear that forgiveness is also essential. Although time eased the pain of loss and betrayal, without the extra step of forgiveness I was consumed by a desire for retribution. Wanting bad things to happen to the people who hurt me was not healthy, and it kept me focused on their failings instead of acknowledging my own. As I stewed over the injustice of my situation, I was unable to see that God could use this painful experience to strengthen my faith.

We cannot move forward with God if our energy is spent nursing old wounds or hoping for another's misfortune. Instead, we can seek God's wisdom and comfort as we work through the pain, remaining open to what God has in store for us.

 Prayer: Dear heavenly Father, help us to forgive so that we can let go of the past and grow closer to you. Amen.

 Thought for the Day: By forgiving those who hurt me, I can better serve God.


(Ms.) Reese Delaney (Georgia, USA)


 PRAYER FOCUS: SOMEONE I NEED TO FORGIVE

This devotion is taken from The Upper Room devotional March-April 2023

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 12, 2023

ENOUGH

 *READ: 1 Kings 17:8-16*

 _The jar of meal was not emptied, neither did the jug of oil fail. 1 Kings 17:16 (NRSV)_


Our family often welcomes foster children into our home.


Earlier this year, our social worker asked if we could host a five-year-old boy. He had cerebral palsy, a seizure disorder, and spoke a different language than our family. We have five other children, and life already felt busy. I told the social worker we would let her know soon – fully expecting to say no.

My Bible reading that day was the story of the widow of Zarephath. Because of a drought, she had only a handful of flour and a little bit of oil left when Elijah asked her for bread. It was difficult, but she gave him all she had. Then, God gave her a miracle – day after day, she used the flour and oil, and the supply did not run out.

As I read about the widow, I felt the Holy Spirit's nudge to say yes to the placement request. It would be easier to say no; but if I did, I knew I would miss this chance to experience God's provision.

We took this young boy into our home. At times it was difficult, but like the widow's flour and oil, our time and love did not run out. As with the widow of Zarephath, God provided all we needed. When God calls us, it is a blessing to say yes.

 Prayer: Generous God, help us to trust that you will provide all we need as we serve others. Amen.

 Thought for the Day: It is a blessing to say yes to God's call.


(Mrs.) Kate Rietema (Michigan, USA)


 PRAYER FOCUS: CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

This devotion is taken from The Upper Room devotional March-April 2023

THURSDAY, APRIL 13, 2023

LIGHT LOAD


 *READ: Matthew 11:28-30*


 _Jesus said, "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28 (NRSV)_

My life seemed fine as I grew from a child into an adult. When I went to school to get my bachelor's degree, everything went well. Even though I wasn't the smartest in class, I finished my education. After that, I began working at a company. I have been fortunate to earn enough income to fulfill my needs.

Then one day a doctor said that I had cancer. My world turned upside down. I cried. I never expected to receive this news. Because of the cancer I now tire quickly and will have to take medicine for the rest of my life.

Every day I go to chapel. After my diagnosis, I began praying and asking, "Lord, why do I have to go through this? Can I afford it?" One day, I felt as if God were taking my hand and whispering, "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." I opened my Bible and looked for the verse. I read it over and over again until I finally felt calm. With this verse to accompany me, I slowly started to enjoy my days. I know that God is always with me. I don't know how long I will live, but my burden feels light.

 Prayer: O God, help us to remember that you are always present for us. Thank you for sharing our burdens so that they become light. Amen.

 Thought for the Day: I don't know what my future holds, but I know God is with me.

(Mr.) Waspati Ken Wardani (Jarkarta, Indonesia)

 PRAYER FOCUS: THOSE WITH A RECENT CANCER DIAGNOSIS

This devotion is taken from The Upper Room devotional March-April 2023

FRIDAY, APRIL 14, 2023

God's Plans for Me

📖 *READ: Ephesians 2:1-10*

📖 _We are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. Ephesians 2:10 (NIV)_

I had a plan for the next few hours: take a walk with my husband, eat lunch, and attend an online Bible study. The timing would be tight, but I would be able to do it all.

When my husband and I started our walk, I spotted our neighbour. I felt led to talk to her, and I got to know her on a deeper level. Then near the end of our walk, we stopped to talk with another neighbour. She told us she was experiencing a major struggle, and we promised to pray for her.

Only 30 minutes before Bible study, my sister called with exciting news. I had not yet eaten lunch and feared I would be late. But then I saw an email from the study leader asking me to offer the opening prayer, so I quickly ate my lunch and joined the meeting on time.

In the past, a day like this would have stressed me out. But since studying Ephesians 2:10 with my Bible study group, I have begun praying that God will open my eyes and heart to God's plans for me. God often calls me to listen, share, and do good works. I strive to be willing and joyful as I fulfill God's purpose for me.

🙏 Prayer: Heavenly Father, grant us the wisdom, grace, and courage to accomplish the works you call us to do. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

💬 Thought for the Day: I will open my heart so that I can discover what God has in store for me. (Mrs.) Terry J. Burns (Florida, USA)

🙏 PRAYER FOCUS: TO REMAIN OPEN TO GOD'S CALL

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