

Saturday, March 16

Exodus 2:23—3:15 *“Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.”* (v.5)

In these days of cushioned pews and cozy hymns, I have to be careful when I go to church not to become too familiar with God. I’ve got to watch that I don’t treat Him as just a Chum, and think He should be delighted I dropped in.

God is not a Big Buddy. He is a holy God. Before Him even the angels veil their faces. And He demands my respect. Therefore, I should shed my “shoes” of pride, selfishness, complacency, criticism (and whatever else they are made of) and come into His courts with reverence and fear. I must prepare myself, because He may want to speak to me as He did to Moses, and call me out to serve Him in some special way.

I don’t know if I’m talking just to myself when I write this way. But I sense that some other people have the same thoughts.

Holy Lord, draw us humbly and expectantly into Your courts.

Psalms 107:33-43, 108; 1 Corinthians 13:1-13; Mark 9:14-29

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Sunday, March 10

Genesis 48:8-22 *“Bless the boys.”* (v.16b NRSV)

Isn’t it great when children have grandparents who take an interest in them! Here is one of them blessing two of his grandsons.

This man, Jacob, hadn’t always been a good role model. In his youth he’d been a deceiver and a manipulator, and had to leave his home under a cloud. But God had worked on him and had brought him to repentance. Now, conscious of all that God has done in his life, he wants God to bless his children likewise.

It’s interesting that he repeats what had happened to himself. He, the younger son, had gotten the blessing reserved for his older brother (27:22). Now he does the same thing for the younger lad here. Why? Did he have a younger brother’s sympathy for another younger brother? Did he want to show that there is no special hierarchy with God? Was the Lord specifically guiding him to do this? We don’t know.

In any case, he blessed them both. And those young lads must have remembered that special, encouraging day for the rest of their lives.

Can we do the same for our grandchildren, and for other little ones around us?

Psalms 66, 67; Romans 8:11-25; John 6:27-40

Monday, March 11

Genesis 49:1-28 *Then Jacob called his sons, and said: “Gather around, that I may tell you what will happen to you in days to come.”* (v.1)

After having blessed two of his grandsons (Genesis 48:16), Jacob now gathers together his sons. Though this passage may seem dry, it reveals four marks of a good father.

He is fair. There is no favoritism here. Not one of his sons is neglected. Each gets his attention.

He is frank. He doesn’t turn a blind eye to their dark sides, but confronts them with significant events in their past, and talks to them man to man.

He is far-sighted. From their past he infers their future. As the saying goes, the child is father to the man. My own father was like that. When I did wrong, he’d say to me, “You’ll be sorry!” And he was right. It wasn’t that he was cruel. Rather, he was wise and loving enough to tell me the truth. I wish I’d listened to him and taken the appropriate corrective steps more often.

He is faithful. Though they were grown men, he still maintained a relationship with them, and exercised his duty of having some responsibility to them.

Let's pray for more fathers like that!

Psalms 89:1-18; 1 Corinthians 10:14—11:1; Mark 7:24-37

Tuesday, March 12

Genesis 49:24—50:14 *“Bury me with my ancestors—in the cave in the field of Ephron the Hittite,...in the land of Canaan.”* (vv.29-30)

Sadly, some people make no provision for their deaths. They leave no will and make no plans for their funeral. And their successors are left with the burden of what to do with their mortal remains and their estate.

Jacob didn't do that. After blessing his family, he planned for his burial. It was to be in his old homeland of Canaan. Guided by this, his son Joseph organized the days of mourning and the large funeral procession. Jacob was to rest in the land God had given him and in the presence of his ancestors.

We too have a homeland. It isn't really the U.S.A. or Canada or anywhere else on earth. It's in heaven. To that place God will bring us to rest with our loved ones who have gone before us. There we shall wait for the day of Resurrection when we shall meet our Lord. And the sorrow and sighing of death will flee away!

Lord, keep us mindful of our heavenly home!

Psalms 97, 99, 100; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34; Mark 8:1-10

Wednesday, March 13

Genesis 50:15-26 *“Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today.”* (v.20)

If bad things have happened to us—like abuse by our family when we were children at home, kicks in the face by our employer at work, or neglect by our friends—we normally feel like hitting back, or blaming our surroundings, or at the least feeling sorry for ourselves.

But that wasn't how Joseph responded. Though he had been sold off as a slave by his brothers, had his reputation smeared by his employer's wife, and been forgotten by his companion in jail, he didn't seek revenge. Though his brothers thought they were banishing him from their life, he realized they were actually pushing him into their future. He saw God's hand in it all. Years later, the apostle Paul recognized the same fact when he wrote, “all things work together for good for those who love God” (Romans 8:28).

With a grateful heart for what God had done, Joseph forgave these people who had hurt him, and he blessed them (v.21)! Can we do the same?

Psalms 101, 109; 1 Corinthians 12:1-11; Mark 8:11-26

Thursday, March 14

Exodus 1:6-22 *The Egyptians became ruthless in imposing tasks on the Israelites, and made their lives bitter.* (vv.13-14)

After the death of Joseph, a new Pharaoh hammered the Israelites into slavery, and then tried to eradicate them by killing off their male babies.

Today, physical slavery is still tolerated on some continents! Other forms of slavery are rampant in our own country. They aren't caused by chains of iron but by habits of the will: slavery to alcohol and nicotine and other drugs; bondage to sex and gambling and money and power; addiction to sports and fashion and public opinion. These control many people, and they exercise as much influence on them as Pharaoh did on the Israelites.

I have a painting of a missionary handing over money to a leering slave-dealer with a whip in his hand. Cowering down at the missionary's feet and kissing his robe is a man in shackles shortly to be released.

Through the centuries the Blood of Jesus has released millions of individuals. It “breaks the power of canceled sin, and sets the prisoner free” (Charles Wesley). Does it need to be applied afresh to “slaves” in our own country?

Psalms 69; 1 Corinthians 12:12-26; Mark 8:27—9:1

Friday, March 15

Exodus 2:1-22 *She named him Moses, “because,” she said, “I drew him out of the water.”* (v.10b)

Isn't it wonderful how our names can be significant? Here is a baby who is drawn out of the water, and who later draws his own people out of Egypt! His future was foretold in his past. He who had known the miraculous power of God in saving him as an infant later experienced the miraculous power of God in saving his whole nation. Drawing out was his theme. And it was given to him by God.

Sometimes we need to go through an experience before we can help others in that same experience. Not only can we understand and sympathize with them, we can offer them hope that God can help them. What about yourself? Have you survived threatening “waters” of suffering, addiction, loneliness, poverty, or fear? If so, like Moses, can you help others to come out of their troubles too?

Lord, thank You that today You still draw us out of “mighty waters” (Psalm 18:16), and set us on solid ground again!

Psalms 102; 1 Corinthians 12:27—13:3; Mark 9:2-13