

GOOD NEWS FOR A BAD DAY!
Matthew 6: 26-34

Anyone who has lived on planet earth for some time have had good days and bad days. Good days are those days when most things in life seem to be in order and what we strive to get done throughout the day seems to go rather smoothly. Bad days are those days when it seems that one thing after another seems to pull us down or hold us back. Some folk describe a bad day as starting off by getting up on the wrong side of the bed. That really describes somebody waking up in a bad mood and making sure that everyone they meet will have a bad day. A really bad day is one of those days when you wonder why you got up out of bed at all! It's one of those days

- when you thought about just letting go of everything.
- when you reach the point where you just want to throw in the towel on a particular situation.
- when some tragedy or unexpected loss throws your whole life in a turmoil.
- when you wanted to just walk away from your job because you felt like you just couldn't take it anymore.
- when you found out that what you shared with your best friend in secret was all over the street before the sun went down.

A bad day is the kind of day when you really worked hard at doing the right things—but it seems that nothing right was going your way.

Bad days are a reality of living in this world because the world isn't perfect—life isn't perfect—our family members and friends aren't perfect—and they will be the first to let us know that we ain't perfect either! I'm talking about that day when,

- as soon as you got the brakes fixed on your car, the alternator went out!
- as soon as you get caught up on the light bill, the telephone gets cut off!
- the rent was due—and your money got funny—but the landlord wasn't laughing!
- the business started slowing down—and the customers stopped coming—and the bill collectors kept calling!
- the husband or wife became unreasonable—and the children wouldn't act right—and even the dog started growling at you!
- the paycheck came up short—and the bank account was empty—and the food in the pantry was scarce—and, on top of all that, the doctor gives you some bad news!

These are the kind of days that can weigh on you so much that you feel like going back to bed, going back to sleep and hoping to wake up thinking that all of this was just a bad dream. It's the kind of day when you don't want to unload your problems on someone else, so you just keep walking around feeling the weight of the world on your shoulders. It's these kind of days when you just want to get away for a while—take a vacation for a few days—but you realize that you don't even have enough money to take the bus across town, let alone take a flight to somewhere else. For some people, these kind of days will get them in a bad mood—and the bad mood will turn into depression—and the depression will cause them to lose their appetite and they wind up having no energy or interest in doing anything else.

Well, my dear brothers and sisters, whenever such a bad day comes into your life and disturbs your existence, always know that there is some good news for your bad days! You see, it is a dangerous thing to have bad days and listen to more bad news. The bad news I'm talking about is not what you hear from the television or radio broadcast but what you don't need to hear when Satan whispers in your ear:

- “You know that you can't do any better than this, so why don't you just give up.”
- “Don't even try to apply for that loan because you know you're going to be turned down.”
- “Why bother applying for that promotion because you know that you're not qualified to get it.”
- “Don't waste your time apologizing for what you did because you know that they're never going to forgive you.”
- “Why bother to pray to God because you know He won't answer your prayers anyway.”

If you want to stay out of the danger zone, then don't let your bad day become a worse day by listening to all this bad news from this bad source.

Church, let me remind you today that there is always good news in the midst of our bad news! When things don't seem to go right and the picture gets dark and dim, just say: “My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness!” When you feel caught between a rock and a hard place—and you don't know which way to turn, remember the words of the song: “I turned it over to the Lord and he worked it out!” When you feel overburdened—overworked—overtaxed—over-stressed—under a cloud—left out in the cold—down in a pit, just remember the words of the 23rd Psalm: “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil because Thou art with me!” And, most importantly, whatever is going on in your life—wherever it takes you—however it gets you there, don't go there alone but take the Lord with you. If you want to stop sinking, then keep on singing: “I cried and I cried; I cried all night long. I cried and I cried until I found the Lord!” As Jesus says in today's Gospel: “Look at the birds in the sky...consider the lilies of the field!” If God gives so much attention to them, how much more attention does God give to us! This is the kind of good news that will get us through all the bad news in life!

Jesus came to this earth and shared life with us, so that we would receive all the good news from God that we need to get through the bad days we face in this life. His instructions to us, given in today's Gospel text from Matthew, are quite clear: “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides.” What are “all these things” Jesus speaks to his disciples about? It's what he preaches in his Sermon on the Mount, found in the previous chapter of this Gospel:

- “Blessed are the poor in spirit, the kingdom of heaven is theirs.”
- “Blessed are they who are merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”
- “Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.”
- “Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven.”

You see, Church, this kingdom of heaven is defined as an experience of total, complete and eternal blessedness. Why seek, first, this kingdom of heaven? We go, first, for this kingdom

—because God is bigger than any problem—any conflict—any disappointment
—any sickness—any trial or tribulation we may face in this life!

—because there is so much more good news in Jesus than there is bad news in whatever we may have to go through in this life!

—because this is where we receive the peace that surpasses all understanding!

—because He is the only One who knows all our needs—and will be there when nobody else is there—and will do what nobody else can do—and will see us all the way through!

—because, when it comes to our salvation, there is more saving grace in Christ than there is sin in us!

—because, as I have said many times before: “Can’t nobody do you like Jesus!”

Seek, first, the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides!”

To seek, first, the kingdom of God is to be not only a hearer of God’s Word but a doer, as well. The only thing we really need to do is follow the Lord Jesus, live in His Word and walk in his ways. Many people fail to reach the kingdom because they do not seek, first, God’s kingdom. Some folk seek, first, the kingdom of the lottery—or the kingdom of alcohol, sex and drugs—or the kingdom of worldly success—or the kingdom of their own agenda, doing things only the way they see it and the way they want it. In the process, God gets bumped out of the picture. In such circumstances, many folk miss out on the blessings from God because they are too busy trying to bless themselves! They get busy trying to push themselves ahead, rather than let the Lord bring them forward. If we seek, first, the kingdom of God, then we let the Lord put us where God wants us to be—bless us when we need that blessing the most—and carry us through when we know we can’t make it on our own.

To seek, first, the kingdom of God is to keep our faith alive and well. You see, we need to know how to not only call on the Lord but also place our trust in the Lord—at all times and in all things! We need to know how to lean on Him when low living will try to draw us down into a pit. We need to look up and see God when dark clouds gather over us in life. We can’t worry about others talking about us, if we know how to have a little talk with Jesus! We can’t fret about the future because we know Who holds tomorrow! We don’t have to live in fear, if we know how to walk in faith! To seek, first, the kingdom of God means that we tell our troubles to the Lord—and not to Jerry Springer, Judge Judy and Oprah Winfrey! To seek, first, the kingdom of God means that we know how to come together in prayer before we fall out with each other over the problem! To seek, first, the kingdom of God means that we let no one and no thing get in the way of God being first and foremost in our lives!

Finally, I have found that there is a formula for us to stay on the right road with Jesus—to stay in the right groove with the good news of the Gospel—to have that blessed assurance that God will see us through. There is a formula for us—that can lift

us up out of the depths of our difficulties and raise our hopes in the face of what happens. There is a formula for us—that will bring the Light to overcome the darkness, lift the burden too heavy for us to bear, turn our sadness into gladness and keep us smiling all the time. This formula is very simple and very easy: “Praise God anyhow!” No matter what is going on, praise God anyhow! Now, I know that there are folk who claim to be “church folk” but they don’t see the need to be in church in a regular basis. There are folk who claim to love the Lord and pray to the Lord—but it seems that they do it at their own convenience, when they can fit God into their schedule. I don’t know what formula works for them because God’s goodness is not dependent on our own goodness or faithfulness. Thank God for His mercy and grace—because God will, still, do for us when we fail to do for God. At the same time, I am grateful enough to show up for God because He has always come through for me! So, this is the formula I have found that keeps me in the good news through all my bad days: “Praise God anyhow!”

You see, Church, I can say like the psalmist said: “I was glad when they said unto me ‘Let us go into the house of the Lord!’” Ever since I have come to know the Lord (at any early age)—for all the years of my life before priesthood, I have always made sure that I was in the house of the Lord every Sunday morning. I wouldn’t know what I would do with myself if I wasn’t in the Lord’s house on a Sunday morning. I just wouldn’t be right the rest of the week, if I wasn’t in the Lord’s house at the start of the week. You see, I am that grateful for all He’s done for me! I can always thank Him and praise Him at home—but I am grateful enough to get up, get dressed and show up in His house—because He’s the One who allowed me to wake up in my own house!

That’s why I want to praise God anyway! I want to be here—in His house

—because Jesus said he would be where two or more are gathered in his name.

—because when we all get together and send our praises up, we know that the blessings will come down.

—because somebody else may be going through something and they may need my prayers and my praise to bring forth blessings upon them.

—because I should know—and never forget—that He is first in my life.

Church, I need to be—I want to be—here—in the Lord’s house—because, when I join the saints of God in sending up praises to God, I just begin to feel all right! I can leave here, knowing that everything will be all right! I need to be—I want to be—right here—in the Lord’s house—because I thank God for being God—and I need to thank Him for all He’s done for me! The words of a song say:

He’s done so much for me, I cannot tell it all!

He saved and set me free, I cannot tell it all!

He gave me the victory, I cannot tell it all!

He’s done so much for me, I cannot tell it all!

But I’m gonna tell it anyway—and praise Him anyhow—and serve Him every day—and worship Him every chance I get—and keep telling it everywhere I go!

Seek, first, the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be given you.”

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