

there will be a heaven on earth where suffering and death will no longer exist. It will be a much better place than now. It seems to me, this second “Garden” will be just like Isaiah’s prophesy and, in this heaven before Christ’s return at Judgment Day, we will join our loved ones and pets.

Following euthanasia, I try to offer a prayer for my clients to assure them of God’s forgiveness and that this final compassionate act of love is to prevent suffering. It is our mutual God-given responsibility to care for His creatures.

Psalm 102; 1 Timothy 5:17-25; Mark 12:28-34

Saturday, February 22

1 Timothy 6:6-21 *But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and we can take nothing out of it.* (vv.6-7 NIV)

As I complete this week of Lent, during these writings, I think back to how I started this journey of Scriptures with an experience of brotherly love on a spiritual church retreat. This led me into new friendships which I hope will continue in a men’s group for my church. Then I wrote about a tough current topic our nation faces namely, human abortion laws. Next, I shared some of my YMCA Holy Week experiences. Then, I celebrated my two Christian friends’ funerals and was reminded of my mortality. One day this Holy Week, I had a Christian brother disagree with me on my belief that pets will be going to heaven. So, I repeated an earlier writing of mine on that subject.

I read recently that our faith is increased by reading God’s word. I hope what I have shared of my life has done that for you as it has for me. Now, as an older man, my heart is full of gratitude to God for a blessed life. I have tried to live with a spiritual oneness with Jesus, as he promised. I am confident in my salvation and eternal life to come. This Easter I have a satisfied mind and contentment.

Isaiah 66:1-6; Psalms:107:33-43, 108; Mark 12:35-44

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Sunday, February 16

1 John 2:3-11 *He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is no occasion of stumbling in him.* (v.10 KJV)

I just returned from a church men’s retreat to Dark Hammock Legacy Ranch near Lake Placid, Florida. The weekend began with my meeting two new Christian brothers from my church and sharing our life stories on a 3-hour road trip to the Southwest Florida ranch.

The weekend weather had been predicted to be a “rain out” but we were blessed by having great weather the entire weekend. The upper half of the state had more than 5 inches and the Daytona 500 was canceled until Monday.

Dark Hammock is a 6,000-acre working agribusiness specializing in native grass-fed beef. It spans 5 miles across. Also, the owners operate a slaughterhouse and retail meat store in Winter Garden, Florida which also sells their beef online.

Our group stayed in a spacious 200-year-old ranch house. Over early Florida history, this beautiful live oak hammock was the “halfway” resting station for many Florida cowboy cattle drives. The cattle drive would start in Northern Florida and end in Tampa where the cattle were shipped to Cuba.

From the time we arrived, we were showered with an abundance of loving Christian hospitality. We had two chefs feeding us three meals a day with an abundance of good food. I especially remember the steak and stone crabs. One morning, many of our group enjoyed skeet shooting. A couple of us went fishing on the farm ponds. One evening, we had a beautiful tour of the old cattle trail on all-terrain vehicles.

Our church’s rector brought one of his best friends as a spiritual leader for the weekend. We spent evenings with Bible study and getting to know one another. On Sunday morning, we had a Eucharist celebration to give thanks and praise God.

This restful, beautiful country setting was perfect to enjoy and be refreshed a Christian brotherhood. I’m hoping, with God’s help, it will continue in our church.

Isaiah 62:6-12; Psalms 66, 67; John 8:12-19

Monday, February 17

1 Timothy 1:1-17 *The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.* (v.14 NIV)

As I write, it is Lent and, starting with yesterdays’ retreat, it was a strange beginning for a season of penance. It reminded me instead of my Cursillo 40 years ago. This was a similar Christian weekend event filled with good food, prayer, music, study, and sharing the love of Christ. The difference was Cursillo was made up of half clergy and half lay people. This was 20 Christian men from our

church. The purpose for both was fellowship and bonding. After my Cursillo, I continued meeting with a small group of men weekly for the next forty years. We prayed, shared our faith, and practiced our Rule of Life, always reminding one another that “Christ was counting on us!”

My experience this past weekend was a renewal and revival. In Cursillo we pray, “Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of the faithful and kindle in us the fire of your love.” Once again, getting away with the Holy Spirit was just what we all needed. I’m praying this will be the beginning of another men’s group at our church. The current troubled times need strong Christian leaders.

Isaiah 63:1-6; Psalm 89:1-18; Mark 11:1-11

Tuesday February 18

Psalm 100 *Know that the LORD is God, It is he who made us, and we are his, we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.* (v.3)

Recently, the nation has been in controversy over a Judge’s ruling that frozen embryos are unborn babies. Now many parents are unable to complete their plans to use these embryos without fear of litigation. The future for all is uncertain until legal opinions can be clarified.

In choosing the Scripture for today and recently listening to a History of the Bible audio, I was reminded of when I visited Jerusalem and saw the Dome of the Rock. This is an important site for the three major religions of the world. All of us agree that God is Lord. Also, we all agree the prophet Abraham is crucial in our faith. So, in my Christian understanding, I am at peace with the Word of God on creation and life. I put my faith in Proverb 3:5-6: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your path straight.”

Thank You, God, for creating me and letting me be born again in Your Spirit. And loving me no matter what the world says.

Isaiah 63:7-14; Psalms 97, 99; 1 Timothy 1:18—2-8; Mark 11:12-26

Wednesday, February 19

Mark 11:27—12:12 *“Haven’t you read this scripture: ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone.’”* (v.10)

In this parable, Jesus tells the story of a vineyard and the many times a landowner sends his servants to collect his share of the crop. Finally, after the caretakers beat all the servant representatives sent, he sends his own son who they also beat and kill.

Recently I listened to a narration of the history of the Bible which reminds me of this parable. It describes the series of God’s covenants with man. First there was the Abrahamic Covenant, followed by the Noahic, Davidic, and, finally, the New Covenant. We all know we live by the final covenant. This was Easter when Jesus was sacrificed for our disobedience to the previous attempts by God and His forgiveness of our sins through faith and gift of salvation.

As I write today it is Good Friday and our YMCA mission committee has prayed for our members and staff daily at 10:30 a.m. each day of Holy Week.

We have been trying to remind the many people coming into the Y to work on their body of their need for spiritual renewal and to keep the “C” in YMCA. Also, we have a non-denominational Easter service in the gym we are inviting them to attend if they don’t have a home church. Happy Easter soon, He has risen!

Isaiah 63:15—64:9; Psalms 101, 109; 1 Timothy 3:1-16

Thursday, February 20

Mark 12:13-27 *“He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. You are badly mistaken!”* (v.27)

As I’ve grown older, I always check the obituaries in my Veterinary Journals comparing my life to others who have died. At 84, I’m very thankful for my long life compared to many. This week, I’ve gone to three funerals for good Christian brothers. The first was at my Episcopal church with well-dressed city folks. It was for a very successful businessman and founding father of the Healing Ministry at our church. He had experienced a documented miraculous healing himself from ALS disease. Doctors, including a neurological friend of mine, couldn’t believe that prayer and his faith had healed him. He lived another 30 years. When I asked him once about his healing, he explained to me that when he asked Jesus to heal him, he experienced what the Bible calls a “born again event” or spiritual baptism. This was like the disciples’ experienced in Acts, a Pentecost event. He said the physical healing was an added bonus.

My second friend was a rancher-farmer and his country missionary Baptist funeral was a much different church, crowd, and preacher. Most were wearing cowboy boots and hats. I was the only one in a suit and tie.

The service talks by the family and friends for these two men represented good and faithful lives who trusted in God’s promise of eternal life in heaven!

I am so thankful for mentors like these in my life.

Isaiah 65:1-12; Psalm 105:1-22; 1 Timothy 4:1-16

Friday, February 21

Isaiah 65:17-25 *“Wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and dust shall be the serpent’s food. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain,” says the Lord.* (v.25 NKJV)

Again, as a veterinarian, when I read this Scripture, which is a favorite of mine, it reminds me of an old print called “Peace” that we have in our home, showing this Isaiah scene with a little child leading the animals. This is a prophecy for the Davidic kingdom to be restored by Christ.

Since retiring six years ago, I’ve spent a lot of time researching what the Church believes about the role of animals in God’s plan. The reason I have wanted to know more about this is to offer caregiving support for my grieving clients during the loss of their family pet. The decision to euthanize a loved pet is a tough one for me, and my clients that consider their dog or cat a family member. Can I assure them their pet will be in heaven?

Today our rector gave a teaching on heaven. He explained that after our earthly death, as believers, we will be with Jesus in transition initially, and then