

Good News Daily

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Sunday, October 27

Psalm 63 *The mouths of liars will be stopped.* (v.11b ESV)

Ben Hunt is an investor who analyzes Wall Street through the lens of game theory rather than basing his decisions on company balance sheets. He says it is only important that “common knowledge” narratives (or propaganda) *sound* truthful in order to have an effect on the market decisions most people make. So Ben looks not at what people have but what they *say* they have, what they *think* they have. Ben has named his approach the *Epsilon Theory*.

Markets and people get “played” this way all the time. Popular narratives that are shouted long enough by “experts” shape public decisions about health care, personal identities, elections, even theology. Sometimes it takes a long time to discover and admit that what everyone “knows” wasn’t so, after all. Lies, intended or not, create real damage.

Because God loves us, He has announced that lying will not be allowed in heaven. He has seen the trouble they cause to His family and His Church. He wants us to be just as discerning while still on earth.

Esther 3:1-15; Psalm 98; 1 Corinthians 10:15-24; Matthew 18:15-20

Monday, October 28

Esther 4:1-17 *Then Esther called for Hathach, one of the king's eunuchs, who had been appointed to attend her, and ordered him to go to Mordecai to learn what this was and why it was.* (v.5)

Books, movies, or TV shows with the words “Secret” or “How To” in their title draw our attention. We are born curious. The promise of learning the “Top Ten Best” or “Signs of... (something important)” push our buttons. We want to know what’s been hidden from us.

By suddenly dressing in shabby sackcloth, Mordecai hoped to get Esther’s attention. She was in danger, and she didn’t know it. Mordecai knew the death threat was actually against all their people, but he couldn’t do anything about it alone. He had to alert Queen Esther, even though she was all out of reach and hidden inside the palace. But that was only a first step. Once she learned the facts, Esther would need to believe them and act on them.

Learning the secrets and getting instructions on *how-to* is exciting. But, as James would write to Esther and Mordecai’s people centuries later, it is necessary then to “be doers of the word, and not hearers only” (James 1:11).

Psalms 41, 52; Revelation 11:1-14; Luke 11:14-26

Tuesday, October 29

Luke 11:27-36 *“This generation is an evil generation. It seeks for a sign....”* (v.27)

Interstate Highway Number Four (I-4) runs through central Florida. It is filled with billboards for all the theme parks and tourist attractions that have made Florida a popular vacation destination. Those attractions get thousands of visitors every day. But in my 40 years of living in Florida, driving up and down I-4, I have never seen cars stopping by those billboards so people could enjoy looking just at them. The purpose of the signs is to keep people moving on toward an attraction itself. That’s the reason the billboards were put up.

Esther wasn’t looking for people to talk with her over dinner. But that’s all Haman could see when the Queen invited him to come with the king to her feast. When we think the signs are all there is to see, we, too, miss the bigger purpose they were meant to serve.

Jesus spoke with signs and parables all the time. But he also said his listeners should “Learn what this means” (Matthew 9:13). In other words: *look further*.

Esther 5:1-14; Psalm 45; Revelation 11:14-19

Wednesday, October 30

Psalm 119:49-72 *It is good for me that I was afflicted...* (v.71)

A friend gave birth to her fourth child as I was writing this week's devotionals. Though she faced the usual, normal, physical discomforts of moms giving birth, this birth day was a happy one all around. But Mommy's experience with her previous child a year ago still affects the whole family. That precious baby arrived with Down's Syndrome.

Joy and privilege at a different level has come for this one sister among her younger and older brothers. Mommy has been invited to bring her to meet with health care students who are in training to serve others with similar special needs. Mommy has shared a picture of her one-year-old daughter, a look of delight shining on her face, all smiles, among her new friends who are all sitting on the playroom floor with her. Daughter's affliction will be turned into a blessing for many others, for many years. The sorrows of the moment will undergo transformation and be forgotten. The joy, the privilege of the call to be part of God's plan, will remain.

Esther 6:1-13; Revelation 12:1-6; Luke 11:37-52

Thursday, October 31

Psalm 50 *The Mighty One, God the LORD, speaks and summons the earth.* (v.1)

Hiking on a dangerous, narrow mountain path, a man slipped and fell down a steep cliff. He grabbed for a thick tree root poking out of the mountainside and cried for help. "Is anybody up there?" From heaven, a loud voice answered. "I am God, and I will save you. Turn loose of that root!" The man was quiet. He thought it over. Then he called out, "Is anyone else up there?"

G. K. Chesterton observed, "The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult; and left untried."

God does speak. He is clear and does not stutter. He has given us ears to hear. We are free to listen. But then it's time for us to decide. It may take courage (also known as faith). But we also need humble, obedient hearts that will respond and obey when God gives us direction.

Esther 6:14—7:10; Revelation 12:7-17; Luke 11:53—12:12

Friday, November 1

Luke 12:13-31 *"Do not be anxious about your life."* (v.22a)

My wife wanted to cut back on caffeine but still enjoyed having a hot drink with her prayer time each morning. One day, reading a gardening social group online, she found information about "blue tea," a caffeine-free beverage made from the flowers of the butterfly pea plant. She began growing some in her garden. She now enjoys alternating "blue tea" with her favorite coffee every other morning. The Lord provided her the information, the garden space, and the kitchen tools. But she still has to pick the little flowers and heat up the water to prepare the blue tea. Not exactly do-it-yourself. It's more of a partnership with her Heavenly Father.

The King provided his beloved wife, Esther, with permission and authority to act to save her Jewish kindred from Haman's genocidal plot. Jesus multiplied bread and fish but left it up to his disciples to distribute them to the crowds. There was no need to be anxious. There was no DIY. The beloved ones got to share work carrying out the solution that God provided.

Esther 8:1-17; Psalms 40, 54; Revelation 13:1-10

Saturday, November 2

Revelation 13:11-18 *It was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast might even speak...* (v.15a)

Writers using computers can draw on computer autocorrect features to help in proofreading texts to find mistakes. This has given rise to jokes about autocorrect programs injecting errors. The limits of artificial intelligence are obvious when texts get changed to "ruin an errand" or "monkey-back guarantee."

Such magical "black box" helpers can only run by GIGO rules: *garbage in, garbage out*. Fr. Robert Ballecer, the Jesuit tech expert at the Vatican, points out that all A.I. programs draw on information claims

and data sets. Information gathering algorithms don't have a way to distinguish reality and from lies. They simply go by what's claimed somewhere, by somebody, most often. Poison one of those information wells, and all the sources become doubtful, losing our trust. This is a benefit only to those who prefer noise that won't limit their power and authority. Such noise from the enemy is a danger to us when we refuse to look to God's Word ahead of everything. This gift from our Counselor and Guide is a trustworthy source of intelligence.

Ezekiel 20:1-17; Psalm 55; Luke 12:32-48

by Rick Hoover

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