

Palm Sunday, April 5

Zechariah 9:9-12 *Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on an ass, on a colt the foal of an ass.* (v.9b RSV)

I can spend an awful lot of time looking for a BIG answer to my BIG problem. Usually I'm looking outside myself, well outside myself and my own routine, for a BIG solution.

It rarely comes. What comes, instead—though I don't wish to rule out a "big" answer—is something near, something right at hand. Like a phone call or e-mail from an uncommon source, or a chance word from Mary or one of our children, or meeting someone while I'm walking around the track.

The answer comes, but sometimes "humble and riding on an ass, on a colt the foal of an ass."

LORD, open me up to the answer that's in front of me.

Psalms 24, 29; 1 Timothy 6:12-16; Luke 19:41-48

Today please pray for:

Dale & Joan McCarthy; Don & Carolyn McCulloch; Kay McCully; Edythe McCutcheon; Jack & Jane McDermott; James & Fran McGlothlin; John & Rev. Tara McGraw; Barrie & Peter McKernan.

Monday, April 6

Mark 11:12-25 *"Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him."* (v.23)

I've never had an easy time with "the faith that moves mountains." Yet here, Christ gives away the store to the believer who "does not doubt in his heart."

So, while I'm usually skeptical, the Lord promises big things to the one who believes with his or her whole heart.

Let's go with this! The reason I say that, is that on occasion, when I have been given a mustard seed of faith to see beyond the seen, big things have happened! I was converted that way, in 1973. At a woeful period in my life, I decided to take a small but risky step. The consequences were unbelievable, and overwhelmingly good.

LORD, inspire me to take a step of faith today.

Lamentations 1:1-1, 6-12; Psalm 51; 2 Corinthians 1:1-

7

Today please pray for:

Judith Mertz; Rick Miller; Pat Mills; Sylvia Mitchell; James & Mary Molofsky; Taylor Morgan & Ken Mundy; Geoffrey & Deborah Moore; Jean Morley; Heidi Morrison & Rick Walker, Taylor Morrison; Phyllis Mueller; Duncan Muir; Peggy Mulvaney.

Tuesday, April 7

Lamentations 1:17-22 *"Behold, O LORD, for I am in distress, my soul is in tumult, my heart is wrung within me, because I have been very rebellious."* (v.20a)

I seem to have been taught by experience that there's a lot more distress out there—I mean, serious distress—than people tend to let on. On any given day, even you and I could probably say to ourselves, "I'm in a complete state." That feeling is what the author of Lamentations is admitting.

Note that he is admitting it to God. He is opening up to the Lord the true state of his soul, how he really feels.

Therein lies a miracle. I keep too many things to myself! Especially the angry feelings or the inconsolable ones. There is such relief when I open up to another, let alone Another.

LORD, help us not to keep our distress to ourselves.

Psalms 6, 12; 2 Corinthians 1:8-22; Mark 11:27-33

Today please pray for:

Jordan & Melissa Nemitz, Sawyer & Parker; Helen Neville; Chris & Sam Nind; Len & Kim Norman. Dennis & Gia Orlando, Dennis T, Rocco & Elias; Walter & Sonia Pansuk; Jason D. Patrignani; Sara T. Patrignani; Rich & Marilyn Paul; James & Shelley Payer; Susan Payne.

Wednesday, April 8

Psalm 55 *Cast your burden on the LORD, and he will sustain you.* (v.22a)

Jesus invited burdened people to come to him and be refreshed.

And who doesn't feel burdened, at least sometimes? You can be burdened by worry, by resentment, by "baggage" from the past, by fear originating from the future. Who doesn't desire to be unburdened?

The psalmist invites us to take the burden we carry and transfer it to God to carry. That's such a great offer! Though oddly enough, I tend not to take Him up on it. When I think of what He could carry—from me—and how much lighter I'd feel if I didn't have to carry it myself... I think His offer is good. And I'm determined to take Him up on it.

LORD, help me give my burden to You to carry.

Lamentations 2:1-9; 2 Corinthians 1:23—2:11; Mark 12:1-11

Today please pray for:

John & Carol Peters; Dave & Daphne Pfaff; Jim & Lois Pierce; Peter & Mary Pierce; Martin & Connie Pinckney; McCutchen; Bill & Betty Plumeri; Andy & Mary Jane Pocalyko; Jackie Poliakoff; Richard & Sally Potts.

Maundy Thursday, April 9

1 Corinthians 10:14-17, 11:27-32 *The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?* (v.16)

Today is a profound day for Christians. It is Maundy Thursday, the day commemorating Christ's Last Supper before he was betrayed and crucified.

He equated the wine he gave to his disciples with the blood he was going to shed in dying. This is as heavy an equation as has ever been drawn. What he was saying is that our sins and our problems are so great that only his death in our place *for those besetting things* could ultimately save us from the consequences of them.

It was a decisive moment for the human race, and a decisive act carried out from and upon God. We needed a miracle, urgently, to save us; and we were given one. We really don't have to live life bound and gagged by our past.

LORD, help us bring together our lostness and Your great action.

Lamentations 2:10-18; Psalm 102; Mark 14:12-25

Today please pray for:

Lollie Prange; Rose Prescott; Paul & Jeanne Price; Ruth Randazzo; John & Laura Ransom; William David & Constance Rapson, William B; Gabriella Ressler & Giuseppe Trudu; Jennifer Richardson; Lois Rieger; Beatie Rimsky; Donald M. Rinedollar; Dennis & Linda Ritchie; Bob & Judi Rood; Jason Roxberry; Walter Roxey.

Good Friday, April 10

Psalm 22 *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* (v.1)

When Christ died on the Cross, he went to the furthest extremity of human bereftness. Those aren't just words. People you know—even you and I—have probably reached our last point of despair at some point in our lives. Maybe not today, maybe not yesterday; but maybe 20 years ago, or 40 years ago, or last year.

No "belief-system" in the world wants to posit a divine savior who is *that* vulnerable. It's not exactly "becoming," and doesn't seem quite right. But our Savior did it. He became that vulnerable.

One effect of this for us is that we are *not alone* when we feel suicidally afflicted. Our children are not alone if they ever feel that way. Our spouses are not alone. Nor will our grandchildren be.

LORD, thank you that You are with us in our darkest hour.

Lamentations 3:1-9, 19-33; 1 Peter 1:10-20; John 13:36-38

Today please pray for:

Skip & Kathy Ruch; Jamie & Toby Schofield, Emma & Erica; Dr. Francis & Angela Schwerin, Hale, Craig & Jessica; Sherm & Bonnie Russ; Lois Saldukas; Forrest Dale & Susanna Rosa Sanford; Emma Sarosdy; Carol Schaller; Pat Schlegel; Bonnie Schlichting; Gary Schultz; Sonia Schultz.

Holy Saturday, April 11

Hebrews 4:1-16 *And before him no creature is hidden, but all are open and laid bare to the eyes of him with whom we have to do.* (v.13)

Without a savior, there is really no help for us at the point of our death.

We are informed here that we are entirely naked and exposed to the eyesight of God. Would anyone really want that? Or would you not enquire, with Bob Dylan in 'All Along the Watchtower', "There must be some way out of here."

Easter Eve, or Holy Saturday, is a symbolic day that recollects a world without God. On this day, God is dead. And without God, there really is no hope, as my own lifelong concoctions are never quite able to do the trick.

You might just call this Sober Saturday, Abstinent Saturday, Lifeless Saturday. The one good thing about it—and it's a very good thing—is that it underlines my need for God, for a *supernatural* solution to my biggest problem, which is me.

LORD, come back soon!

Lamentations 3:37-58; Psalm 88

Today please pray for:

John & Michele Simourian; Thomas Smith; John & Barbara Soggs; Jeanenne Somers; Nevin & Carolyn Souers; Chris & Ricki Soule.

by Paul Zahl

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