

LOOKING UP - DAILY DEVOTIONALS

Daily reflections to help us Look-Up during Lock-Down.

January 4-8, 2021

LOOKING UP - January 4th

Daily reflections to help us Look-Up during Lock-Down. Please share so that other can join in too.

READING: Isaiah 53

REFLECTION: Do you know just how much you are loved? This prophetic passage in Isaiah gives us a glimpse of what Jesus would come to do about 700 years before he set foot in our world. Isaiah describes the Messiah as one who would take up our infirmities, carry our sorrows and be pierced for our sins. Consider for a moment how you feel when you know that you have committed a sin, there is a heaviness of guilt and a sting of sorrow - now try to imagine how Jesus felt bearing the cumulative weight and collective pain of all of humanity's sin. It is impossible to imagine, but Jesus bore it all! He didn't just take some of it, he took all of our sin so we would be 100% set free. This is how much he loved us. He willingly and lovingly did this so that each of us could be set free for eternity.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, it is impossible to imagine how great humanity's sin is and how much greater your love is to cover it. With my humble prayer today I thank you for your love - while I cannot wrap my mind around it, help my soul to know your love. Amen.

LOOKING UP - January 5th

“What do YOU want?”

Read: Ephesians 5

Reflect: Have you ever known someone who always seemed to insist on their own way? It can be frustrating, whether you are trying to make plans or share an idea with them. We might feel disrespected, used, ignored. On the other hand, the best relationships are ones that are built on mutual respect and a healthy balance of give and take. A true friend is someone who cares enough to know what brings us joy and takes the time to share it. In today's passage we are urged to, “find out what pleases the Lord”. God invites us into a loving relationship with him where He gives His best and welcomes us to give our best to Him out of gratitude for all He has done. In our walk with God, it will be difficult to know Him and His will for us when we keep coming to Him with our agendas and demands. Author William Barclay said it well when he wrote, “true prayer is asking God what He wants.” Jesus, models this for us in his relationship with God the Father. As he prayed in anguish on the night of his betrayal, he called out saying, “Not my will, but Your will be done!”

Pray: *Heavenly Father, today I lay aside my list and simply ask, “What do You want?” You have been so good to me and now I simply rest in Your presence, desiring to move forward in Your will. Open my mind, stir my soul and move my feet in such a way that I would do Your will and please You today. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

LOOKING UP - January 6th

“You gotta 2:14 it!”

Read: Philippians 2

Reflect: In these days of winter where the news seems to match the weather, it is very easy to complain. It is also very easy to lose our cool with others. We wish our circumstances would change, we get annoyed with how crooked the world is and in the process get bent out of shape! A few years ago a wise teacher shared an idea with me for when I am tempted to complain, he said, “You gotta 2:14 it!” He was pointing to Philippians 2:14 and the admonition to cut out our complaining. Truth is, the world has enough people who point out the problems and faults of others, like dark clouds they seem to cast a shadow over everything they are near. What the world really needs are people who, “shine as lights in the world.” We do this as we resist the temptation to always curse the darkness and choose to shine the light of Christ through our lives.

Pray: *Father, forgive me for where I have given into the mood of the times - where I have been quick to complain and short in my temper. These days seem so bleak Lord, but You call me to shine light. I admit I have no energy on my own to do this, so I call upon you to empower me. As I draw near to You today may I be recharged to shine bright for you! In the name of Jesus, who is the Light of the World, I pray, Amen.*

LOOKING UP - January 7th

“Our Portable Prisons”

Read: Luke 4

Reflect: A few years ago a Star Wars movie came out where, in one scene, two men found themselves in a prison. As one prisoner rattled the bars the other commented, “There is more than one sort of prison, I sense that you carry yours wherever you go.” I wonder how true this is for many of us, we live lives feeling trapped. Trapped by the guilt of our past, legalistic religion, generational patterns, habitual sin, addiction, fears, abusive relationships, seeking approval - to name a few. These are all things that keep us stuck and limit the full life God promises us in Jesus.

When Jesus visited his hometown of Nazareth, he read the scriptures aloud in synagogue one day. He read these words from the prophet Isaiah: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed.” On that day Jesus made it clear he had come to fulfill this prophecy and bring the full freedom it promised.

The people's excitement for Jesus soon turned to murderous anger when they realized the freedom he offered wasn't just for the Jewish people - but would be offered to the entire world - even the lowliest of people. The kind of freedom that Jesus offers is full, free and available to all who call upon him, recognizing their need of a saviour. Yes, even you!

Pray: Jesus, you have unlocked the door of my prison and it is my choice to either remain in it or run to you. In you I am no longer condemned, you have paid my debt with your riches, you have offered yourself as my ransom, you have stood condemned in my place so I could be justified before God. As I look at my life I declare, “Whom the Son has set free is free indeed!” Amen.

LOOKING UP - January 8th - "My daily bread"

Read: Proverbs 30, Matthew 6

Reflect: Have you ever heard of a man named Agur? While we don't know much about him, he offers one of the most humble prayers found in scripture. He prays in Proverbs 30:

*Keep falsehood and lies far from me;
give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread.
Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the LORD?'
Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonour the name of my God.*

This is the prayer of a man who recognizes the frailty of the human condition and humbly admits his need of God's gracious care. This thought is reflected in the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples... "Give us this day our daily bread."

The indication from these humble prayers of Agur and of Jesus is that our Heavenly Father invites us to seek him daily for all we need. Whether new mercy for the morning (Lamentations 3:23) or the daily provision of our physical needs, we have a Father who welcomes us to find all we need in Him.

Pray: Heavenly Father, You have created all things in this universe - everything belongs to You. As Your child, I know that you will provide for all my needs with perfect timing and divine provision. Thank you for sustaining me up until this very moment. Help me to be patient when I feel short-changed or envious of others. Forgive me for the pride of thinking that prosperity comes from my own hands. I am not simply thankful for the provision You have given but for who You are Lord. In Jesus' name, Amen.