

Stretching Toward Sunday

Thoughts, readings and reflections
based on this week's lectionary readings

July 6, 2014

Proper 9A/Ordinary 14A/Pentecost +4

The readings this week:

- Genesis 24:34-38, 42-49, 58-67 ◦ Psalm 145:8:14
- Romans 7:15-25a ◦ Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30



[Click here to read this week's Scriptures](#)

Freedom

This Sunday is two days after the 4th of July, the celebration of Independence for we Americans. I never know how to connect our worship of God to our patriotism as citizens of the U.S.A.

One of my all-time favorite bands is [Five Iron Frenzy](#) and they have an incredible song of worship called ["Every New Day."](#) The song has absolutely nothing to do with the 4th of July; however, there is this one line that always comes to my mind when commentators start reflecting on freedom at this time of year.

*"Freedom is love without condition,
without a beginning or an end."*

I don't have words to explain why I think of this every 4th of July, but I know that the freedom I feel in God's love is more spectacular than any fireworks display I've ever seen.

That freedom somehow means that Paul could have moments when his pride fell away and he had to admit that sin often got the better of him regardless of how much he hated it and didn't want to fall into those same traps again and again. As

upsetting as this state of being seems to be for Paul, the fact of the matter is that God loves us so much that we have freedom - freedom to completely screw up over and over again and God still loves us without condition. And, as Paul reminds us, our love for God may not lead to perfection, but it certainly leads to some heartache for the ways in which we let God down.

Isn't it completely awesome that even though we find ourselves doing this again and again that God makes every single day brand new again? What could be a greater freedom than that?

[From Miriam's Tambourine](#)



"Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."

[A Weird Thing](#)



Reflecting on the Word



___ 1st Reading: [Genesis 24:34-38, 42-49, 58-67](#)

God wants to give you the desires of your heart. What are you yearning for today? How does the servant's account in 24:33-49 reveal his excitement and awe at the Lord's guidance? Have you been in a situation in which you were not given a choice about where you would go or what role you would fill? What was that experience like? Did you go along, or did you fight against it? Where was God in that experience? [Quiet Time Bible Study, InterVarsity Press, Sermons that Work](#)

___ Psalm Reading: [Psalm 145:8-14](#)

Think of a person whom you see as reliable. Describe the person and your response to his or her reliability. What descriptive words and phrases are used about God in this prayer? What phrases suggest that God is reliable? How does God help those who are in need? What image of God comes through to you most clearly? How does the picture of God here compare or contrast with your image of God's reliability? Why is it important for you to know that God is reliable? [Quiet Time Bible Study, InterVarsity Press](#)

___ 3rd Reading: [Romans 7:15-25a](#)

Saying no to a piece of pie we don't need *seems* so simple, but is easier said than done. How have you recently struggled to do what you know you should do? According to verses 15-20, why does Paul feel so wretched? How can a person's anguish and frustration with sin be beneficial? To what extent can you identify with Paul's struggles in these verses? Explain. Why is it important to realize that only Christ can rescue you from the power of your sin? [Quiet Time Bible Study, InterVarsity Press](#)

Praying Toward Sunday

Thank you, dear God-
That when we are get very tired
from trying to do our very best
we can come to you for rest.
That when we have worries
like an ants' nest in our chest
we can come to you for rest.
That when we have been tempted
and done stuff we detest
we can come to you for rest.
Thank you, dear God,
that no trouble is too hard for you
and no burden is too heavy for you.
Through Jesus our Brother and Saviour.
Amen!

[Prayer for Children](#), Bruce Power

God's Supply

One morning while shopping, I began chatting with a woman who was a radiant Christian. After mentioning that her income was extremely meager, she encouraged me when she shared this incident:

“Recently our pastor asked if I needed special prayer for any material needs. I answered, ‘Just pray that I’ll know more of Christ, because through Him I receive all things!’” This woman obviously was in the habit of looking expectantly to God, the true supplier of her needs.

David began Psalm 145 with an eloquent burst of praise to God (vv.1-13). Then he wrote about our deep human needs and how those needs are satisfied by God’s abundant and freely given supply (vv.14-21).

What is it, then, that keeps this law of supply and demand from operating as God intended? The problem is that we often live as though we are self-sufficient. We’re shocked when life reminds us that we aren’t. But that’s the revelation we need if we are to become God-dependent people. We must recognize that it is God alone who provides for our needs. The Lord desires to be responsible for you and your needs today. Will you let Him?

*Here is my heart, Lord Jesus,
I have but one for Thee;
Oh, let my heart be Thine alone,
Thy will be done in me. —Mick*

Our needs cannot exhaust God's supply.

Jonie Yoder, [Our Daily Bread](#)

___ 4th Reading: [Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30](#)

How often do we focus on details of a situation or a person and miss the greater message? Think about the image of a pair of oxen pulling weight that neither could possibly do on their own. What burdens are you carrying that might be lighter if you were yoked to Christ? The other meaning of “yoked” is to be like the one you are yoked to, as a student is to a teacher. Jesus says “I am gentle and humble in heart.” In what ways are you gentle and humble as you seek to be more like Jesus? For the next few days, make a practice of noticing ordinary, everyday people, tasks, and events in your life. Pay special attention to things you know well, take for granted, or do by rote. Can you hear God’s flute? Or God’s wailing? [Sermons that Work](#)