

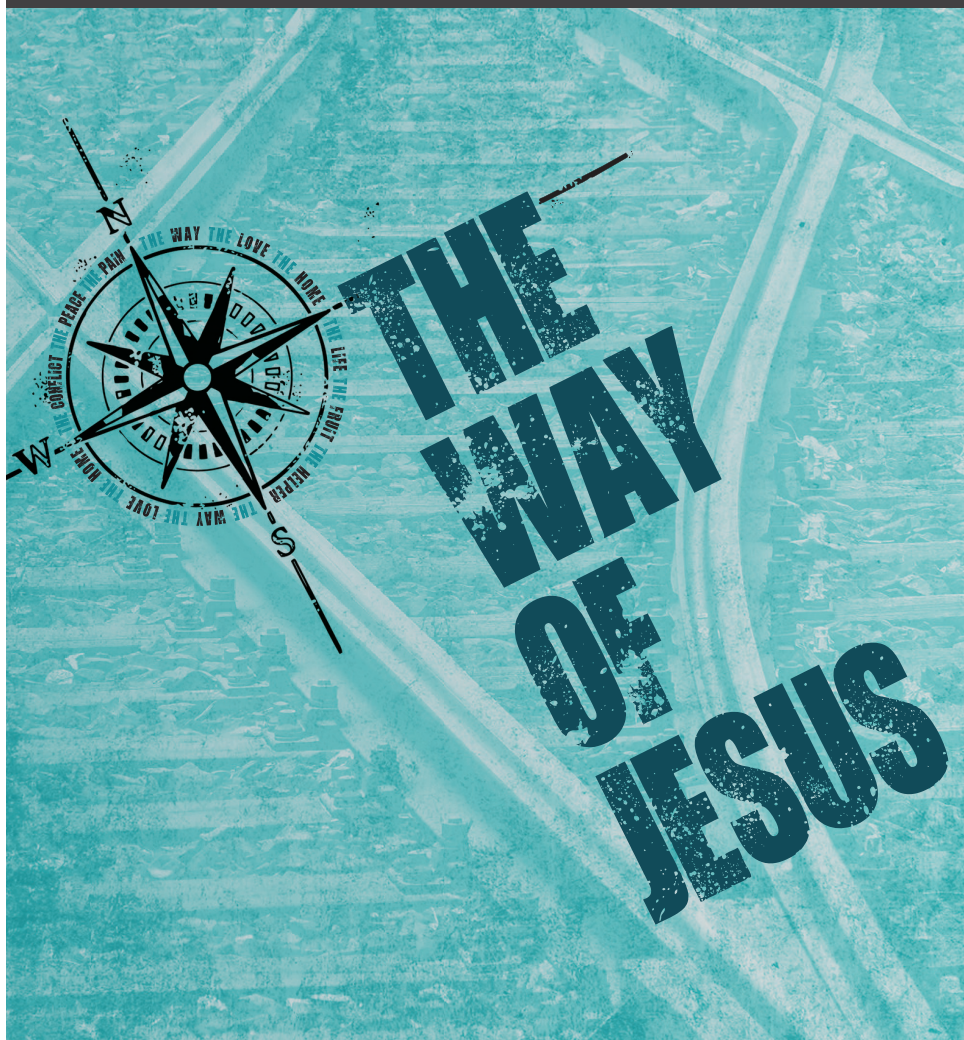
GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

JULY 6 - 10, 2020



MONDAY

John 16:16-24

Jesus tells His disciples that very soon they will no longer see Him. His death will cause them such intense pain that it will be a time of great weeping and mourning. However, they are not to lose hope because in time their deep sorrow will be turned into joy. The disciples did not understand what Jesus meant so when He was crucified, they had lost all hope.

When one loses all hope, there is nothing to live for. An example of the result of lost hope is seen in the life of Louis Zamperini, Olympic runner, serving in the U.S. Air Force during World War II. His plane was shot down over the South Pacific, and he and two other crew members survived the crash. For many days they drifted on a life raft on the open ocean far from any land.

Louis and one of the other crew members were determined to keep their minds active while they drifted for endless days on the open sea. They would tell each other their life stories. They described in minute detail the construction of a dreamhouse from the very beginning stages of designing the house, laying the foundation, and nailing each board into place. During all their lengthy conversations, the third man kept silent or would repeatedly say, "We're going to die! We're going to die!" He had lost all hope.

After drifting for about thirty days, the one who had lost all hope died. The other two continued to survive and drifted on the raft for over forty days until they were rescued. When one loses all hope, the will to live is

gone, which can even affect the length of one's life. This is a picture of how the disciples might have felt. (Laura Hillenbrand)

When hope is gone, what is left? The disciples did not yet know the end of the story. However, we know how the story ends. Jesus arose from the dead and lives forever more! We can rejoice in this certainty. When we go through the pains of life, we may weep a flood of tears. However, we do not lose hope because we know that in the end Jesus rose again, and we can experience His victory as well.

QUESTIONS

In your times when all hope is gone, what can be a source of comfort for you?

PRAYERS FOR ANNA AND BRIAN KLEINSASSER

Pray for Anna and Brian Kleinsasser, who serve with YWAM in Heredia, Costa Rica, in the School of Sustainable Development, which assists those in poverty by teaching them sustainable development, as well as taking the gospel and God's kingdom to them.

TUESDAY

Luke 24:15-49

The two disciples on the road to Emmaus were described as “their faces downcast.” When they talked about Jesus they said, “*But we had hoped that He was the one who was going to redeem Israel.*” The hope they once had was now gone. They had seen Jesus as the promised Messiah of their ancient Scriptures, the one for whom the Jews for many centuries had eagerly awaited. The one who would drive out their Roman enemies. This hope was now dead! This was the end of the story.

Later, the two disciples learned that the story had not ended. When they came to realize that this stranger with them was Jesus Himself, they recalled how their hearts were burning within when He was talking with them. They hurried to tell the other disciples the good news that Jesus had risen from the dead. Their grief was turned into joy.

When we do not know how the story ends, we frequently can lose hope. For instance, when the Communists took over China in 1949, all missionaries were expelled. Christian churches were closed. Pastors were put into prison. Chairman Mao’s wife boasted that Christianity had been eliminated from China, and the only signs of Christianity in China were now in the museums. The Western world, having no information coming out of China, assumed the worst; Christianity was now dead in China. Hope was gone. The work of 20,000 missionaries laboring over 200 years was terminated! What a waste! End of story!

Unbeknownst to the outside world, God was more active in China than ever before. With the missionaries and pastors gone, the laity rose up and took over leadership of the churches. Since they could not meet openly in buildings, they met secretly in small groups in homes. The small house churches became more effective in evangelism than the big groups that used to meet in church buildings. The church grew faster under Communism than before. The grief of the Chinese Christians was turned into joy. (David Aikman)

When hope appeared to be absent in China, God was still actively at work, although not always visible to human eyes. When Jesus was crucified, all hope appeared to be gone. But God was still at work actively carrying out His plan. What appeared to be a great disaster in human eyes was God completing His perfect plan. God allows pain in our lives as a necessary part of His process to bring us joy.

QUESTIONS

What might be hindering you from seeing God's hand at work in the pains you are facing?

PRAYERS FOR ANNA AND BRIAN KLEINSASSER

Pray for God's direction and leading if He would have the Kleinsassers stay in Costa Rica, or is He leading them onward.

WEDNESDAY

Philippians 1:12-18

Paul is writing from prison. He hears that because of his imprisonment, the believers have been encouraged to share the gospel more courageously and fearlessly. He rejoices in hearing this news. He delights in knowing that his imprisonment is causing the gospel to advance all the more. The pain of his imprisonment is resulting in his joy. God sometimes allows pain as the necessary part of the process to bring us lasting joy.

The life of Adoniram Judson, missionary to Burma for thirty-seven years, 1813-1850, is a good example of God using pain to bring blessing. Disaster after disaster haunted Judson for many years. He was imprisoned by the Burmese authorities for seventeen months; at night his ankles were tied together, and his legs were suspended on bamboo poles. Later, his wife and their three children died from tropical diseases. This painful loss drove him to build a shelter in the jungles where he mourned for many days in solitary anguish.

In time he remarried and had eight children. His second wife and three more of their children died from tropical illnesses. Later, he married a third wife and had two children through her. Sadly, his third wife and one of their children died from tropical diseases. Pain after pain! What more could he endure?

On top of the agony of multiple losses, his ministry was not encouraging. It took six years before he had his first convert. For nineteen years he saw hardly any fruit from his arduous labors. He persevered and continued to sow the seeds of the gospel at every opportunity.

After nineteen years with hardly any fruit, Judson began to see the Spirit working. Strangers would come to his door inquiring whether he was the one who could tell them how to find God. Multiple numbers of people began turning to Christ. Many churches were established. His churches became the foundation for the Baptist denomination in Burma, which today numbers over 4,000 churches and 700,000 members. He translated the Bible into Burmese, which is the translation used by churches in Burma today. After many years of pain, his grief was turned into joy. (Sharon Hambrick)

God sometimes allows temporary pain in our lives in order to produce long-term joy.

QUESTIONS

What pains or trials are you presently facing? What do you think God is trying to teach you? Or, if you do not yet see what God is doing in the trials of your life, can you persevere and continue to trust Him knowing that good will come out of it?

PRAYERS FOR ANNA AND BRIAN KLEINSASSER

Pray for provision for YWAM Heredia. The COVID-19 situation has shut down YWAM teams from coming (and other short-term volunteers). Pray for the upcoming Discipleship Training School (DTS) in September, for students to come and for staff as they prepare.

THURSDAY

Read John 16:7-15; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22

Jesus told His disciples of His soon departure from this world. They would grieve; but their sorrow would be turned into joy when they would see Him again after His resurrection. *“I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy”* (v. 22). This joy will not be taken away even when the disciples go through severe persecutions in the future.

Throughout the centuries Christians have endured persecutions, refusing to give up their joy in Christ. An example of this is Hong Yan (not his real name), pastor in Southeast Asia, imprisoned for twelve years for refusing to renounce his faith. During his lengthy imprisonment, he maintained his joy by sharing his faith with other inmates. In time several were saved, and he would disciple them. When these prisoners had served their sentences and were released, they went out and planted churches. Yan was using the prison as a discipleship training center.

Another example of Christian joy that cannot be taken away is the life of Kim Phuc Phan Thi in Vietnam. She is known as the Napalm Girl. The picture of her at the age of nine screaming while running naked down the road during the Vietnam War was circulated worldwide. She was screaming in pain because an exploding napalm bomb had splashed napalm jelly on to her back and burned off her clothing. Napalm is a flammable gelatin that clung on to her back and burned deeply into her flesh.

Kim had to undergo several years of medical procedures because the napalm had burned deeply into her nerve tissue. As a result, she has had to endure a lifetime of excruciating pain. This has caused her to develop an intense anger toward those she blames for causing her pain and against those who have taken advantage of her agony. The government took her out of school to use her for propaganda purposes in other countries to showcase the cruelty of the Americans in the war.

At the age of nineteen, Kim became a Christian. But she could not forgive those who had caused her so much pain. It took her many years to slowly, a little bit at a time, be able to forgive her enemies. It was a long difficult process. (Kim Phuc Phan Thi)

Today Kim travels the world speaking to groups about the joy of experiencing God's power to enable her to forgive her former enemies. It is a joy that cannot be taken away.

QUESTIONS

Are you letting anything take away your joy in the Lord? What can you do about it?

PRAYERS FOR ANNA AND BRIAN KLEINSASSER

Pray for the Kleinsassers' adult kids and their elderly parents, for their health and God's provision.

FRIDAY

1 Corinthians 15:50-58

When Jesus was crucified, His disciples had lost all hope. They saw His death from a human point of view. Before His death, Jesus had reassured them that their grief would turn into a joy that could not be taken away. They needed to see His death from God's point of view, that it was part of His perfect plan from eternity.

We need to see life from God's perspective. It is like looking at a piece of embroidery work. One side is beautiful, and the other side is a mess of threads. Looking at the backside is the human view of life, one big mess. Looking at God's side, we see the beauty of His plan. When the disciples came to see God's side of the embroidery, they gained a joy that could not be taken away.

When we are able to see life from God's point of view, this seemingly chaotic world begins to make sense. For instance, after the Vietnam War many Vietnamese refugees (the "boat people") fled the country. They went through much hardship in their efforts. However, God used this time to lead many of the refugees to Christ. Close friends of mine took into their home two Vietnamese boat-people refugees who in time were saved.

Last year, I led a marriage seminar for twenty pastoral couples in Hanoi, Vietnam. Five pastors present in that seminar were saved in refugee camps following the war. God was using the horrors of the war to bring many people to Himself. The church grew faster after the war than before. God was weaving a beautiful embroidery out of the destruction of the war.

This same story holds true among the refugees in the chaotic Middle East. Many Muslim refugees had to flee the fighting in Iraq and Syria. A large number of them have received Christ in the refugee camps. A pastor in Lebanon led an evangelistic meeting in a refugee camp. Out of one hundred people attending the gathering, twenty made decisions for Christ. In the past, a missionary would labor for many years before having a single convert. More Muslims are being saved in recent years than in the past 200 years of missions work among Muslims. God is busy weaving a beautiful embroidery.

When we see God's side of the embroidery, our grief can be turned into joy. Therefore, in troubled times we can stand firm in our faith, always giving ourselves fully to the Lord's work, because we know that our labors for Him are not in vain.

QUESTIONS

Are you able to give yourself fully to the Lord's work? What might be hindering you?

PRAYERS FOR ANNA AND BRIAN KLEINSASSER

Pray for Schools of Sustainable Development to be set up in Africa.

Sources

- Laura Hillenbrand, *Unbroken: A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience, and Redemption* (New York: Random House, 2010).
- David Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing: How Christianity Is Transforming China and Changing the Global Balance of Power* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2006).
- Hambrick, Sharon, *Adoniram Judson: God's Man in Burma* (Greenville, SC: BJU Press, 2001).
- Kim Phuc Phan Thi, *Fire Road: The Napalm Girl's Journey through the Horrors of War to Faith, Forgiveness, and Peace* (Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers, 2017).

