

Lectionary
Readings for every day
You Select!



in the HCUC

No. 1

For 8 March 2015

Dear Friends

Welcome to another series of Shalom. Let's begin with a little story.

The young lad looked at the old codger with wide innocent eyes and said “You should be dead!” The old codger was a lively 90 year old man who enjoyed helping young 8 year-olds improve their reading skills. The young lad had awakened to the fact that his mentor was pretty old. So he asked “How old are you?” When John, his elderly friend, said “92” it was a dimension of life that the lad hadn't realised existed. Hence his reply. Incidentally John loved recounting this little slice of life.

One of my favourite writers began his latest book by reflecting on his 70th birthday. He indicated that his birthday was always in the season of Lent—a season that begins on Ash Wednesday. He reminded his readers that Ash Wednesday has a ceremony which is a vivid reminder ‘that we are all mortal and marked for death’. The ceremony uses ashes which are rubbed on the forehead in the shape of a cross. The words with the action are: “Dust thou art and to dust thou shalt return.” Mortality looms large, he writes.

Now add another side to all this. We are all living longer. That's a general statement. I know that you will be very aware of situations where individuals have died well before reaching the three score years and ten that Psalm 90 mentions. Is it time to update the Psalm? Maybe we should note that the Psalm goes on to say even if we reach 80 years yet those extra years bring us trouble and sorrow, life is soon over, and we are gone. Ps 90:12 makes a clear suggestion—remember to count our days that we may apply our hearts to wisdom. That reminds me of the comment: it is easier to be an old fool, than a wise old owl. So what am I on about? Whatever it is springs from 3 things:

1. Recently someone asked me “How long do you want to live?”
2. I've been reading a feature item in TIME magazine about longevity—about the advances in medicine, about a new awareness of the importance of the mind and our outlook on life. How to combine the physical, mental and spiritual.
3. The Easer period raises for many of us questions about: *Why am I living? What is so-called 'eternal life'? How do we find quality of life as we experience a greater quantity of years? Does the term 'resurrection' have meaning and relevance for you?*

Whew! That's enough stuff to explore for all of 2015.

Sincerely - Lester

	Psalm	Epistle/OT	Gospel
Monday 9 March:	42:1-2; 43:1-4	2 Kings 5:1-15	Luke 4:24-30
Tuesday 10 March:	25:3-10	Dan 2:20-23	Matt 18:21-end
Wednesday 11 March:	147:13-end	Deut 4:1,5-9	Matt 5:17-19
Thursday 12 March:	95:1,2,6-end	Jer 7:23-28	Luke 11:14-23
Friday 13 March:	81:6-10, 13, 16	Hosea 14	Mark 12:28-34
Saturday 14 March:	51:1,2, 17-end	Hosea 5:15-6:6	Luke 18:9-14
Sunday 15 March <u>Lent 4</u>			
Ps 107:1-3,17-22; Num 21:4-9; Eph 2:1-10; John 3:14-21			

	Psalm	Epistle/OT	Gospel
Monday 16 March:	30:1-5,8, 11-end	Isa 65:17-21	John 4:43-end
Tuesday 17 March:	46:1-8	Ezek 47:1-9,12	John 5:1-3,5-16
Wednesday 18 March:	145:8-18	Isa 49:8-15	John 5:17-30
Thursday 19 March:	25; 147:1-12	Isa 11:1-10	Matt 13:54-58
Friday 20 March:	34:15-end	Jer 26:8-11	John 7:1-2,10, 25-30
Saturday 21 March:	7:1-2,8-10	Jer 11:18-20	John 7:40-52
Sunday 22 March <u>Lent 5</u>			
Ps 51:1-12 or Ps 119:9-16; Jer 31:31-34; Heb 5:5-10; John 12:20-33			

	Psalm	Epistle/OT	Gospel
Monday 23 March:	23	Josh 2:1-14	John 8:1-11
Tuesday 24 March:	102:1-3, 16-23	Numb 21:4-9	John 8:21-30
Wednesday 25 March:	40:5-11	Isa 7:10-14	Luke 1:26-38
Thursday 26 March:	105:4-9	Gen 17:3-9	John 8:51-end
Friday 27 March:	18:1-6	Jer 20:10-13	John 10:31-end
Saturday 28 March:	121	Jer 31:10-13	John 11:45-end
Sunday 29 March <u>Palm Sunday</u>			
Ps 118:1-2,19-29; Isa 50:4-9a; Phil 2:5-11; Mark 11:1-11 or John 12:12-16			

The special feature article in TIME magazine begins with the heading:

Everyone wants to live longer, and science is starting to make that happen. But living better will be the real challenge—and opportunity.

Here are a few brief reflections on this heading.

- * Beneath our desire to live longer is the simple powerful deep-rooted desire to live. We are born with a built-in urge to stay alive. It is part of the thrust of the life force and it is at work in us whether we are aware of it or not.
- * However, it seems that the will to live—to stay alive and extend our life span is not the only force at work within us. We also have a built-in urge and hunger for satisfaction in being alive. We may call it a desire for meaning and purpose, or a longing for a rich and enriching quality in our living.
- * There are lots of blocks to these deep desires. Obvious ones are ill health, unhelpful life styles, negative attitudes (including the fear of death itself), destructive experiences, fatal accidents.
- * “To live better”... is to discover ways to keep our bodies in good shape, able to cope with the daily demands of life. These days the main and positive response to this need puts the emphasis on gym, work, sports, walking, yoga, balanced life styles, healthy food. The physical body is so much at the centre of our daily life that it leads us to the conclusion that “I am my body”. When the body dies then its hard not to conclude that the ‘I am’ is no more.
- * Let’s try looking at this another way. In the four gospels it is very clear from the story of Jesus that he was a great healer. He was constantly involved in helping people to have healed and healthy bodies. 80% of the gospels is recording Jesus’ healing ministry. Our physical bodies are crucial. They are essential for expressing our creativity, our love, our emotions, our thoughts and ideas. They are wonderful tools. But Jesus never allowed his healing work to be at the very heart of his ministry. What was at the centre? It was his passion we should know we are more than the body. The more has to do with the buried Self that permeates our physical body. Jesus, for most of us, is the one who highlights this reality. He hints at it when he speaks of losing our life and the paradox of finding it. Somewhere in this he seems to be referring to two ‘selves’ — the temporary soon to crumble self, and the true Self which endures eternally. He longs for us to know it, enjoy it, and live it.

When Longevity Hasn’t Reach Us—Yet!

An unknown monk saw the end was in sight and thought about ... If ...

If I had my life over again, I’d try to make more mistakes next time. I would relax. I would loosen up. I would be sillier than I’ve been this trip. There are only a few things I would take seriously.

I would climb more mountains, swim more rivers, watch more sunsets. I would do more walking and looking.

I would eat more ice-cream and less beans. I would have more actual troubles and fewer imaginary ones.

You see I am one of those cautious persons who live sensibly and sanely each hour and each day. If I had my life again I’d have more moments. In fact I’d try to have nothing else—just moments, one after another instead of living so many years ahead each day. I have been one of those people who never go anywhere without a hot water bottle, a gargle, a raincoat, aspirins, and umbrella. If I had it to do again I would travel lighter. I would go places, have more fun, ride more merry-go-rounds and I’d pick more daisies—and flowers from other peoples’ gardens!

Lord, help me.
My boat is so small.
Your ocean is so immense.

Your body is mortal,
There’s no escaping that.
You, though, are an
immortal Self.

- An ancient scripture

So teach us to count
our days,
that we may gain
a wise heart.

- Ps 90:12

Discover the
inner meaning
of silence,
and learn the
wisdom
that heals
the world.

- M Holiday