

Pray More Lenten Retreat - Transcript

The Trouble When we Rely on Our Own Strength

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Hi. My name is Mary Lenaburg. Welcome to the Pray More Novenas Lenten Retreat. Today, we're going to be talking about perseverance in faith during times of challenge. But first, let's pray together, shall we? We're going to say the Come Holy Spirit prayer.

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen. Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of Your faithful, and enkindle in them the fire of Your love. Send forth Your Spirit that they shall be created, and You shall renew the face of the earth. In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Today we're going to look at the readings of March 21st. Here we are, during our walk of Lent, this opportunity to dive into deeper relationship with our Lord, these 40 days set aside as we walk our own path of Calvary. And it's a wonderful opportunity to really kind of dig deeper into scripture, dig deeper into the relationship that you have with Christ. Where does it need improvement? How can we change it up? How can we listen with a little clearer ear as to what He needs us to do for Him?

So the first reading is from the book of Jeremiah, and it's chapter 17, verses 5-10. And I want to read you a little section of it. It says ***Cursed is the man who trusts in human beings. So we're talking about men who rely on their own strength. Whose heart is turned away from the Lord. He is like a barren bush in the desert that enjoys no change of season, but stands in a lava waste, a salt and empty earth.*** Jeremiah is pretty direct there. When we rely on our own strength, we have nothing to draw from. There is no life. He goes on to say ***Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose hope is in the Lord. He is like a tree planted beside the waters that stretches out its root to the stream: It fears not the heat when it comes; In the year of drought it shows no distress, but still bears fruit.***

That is the tree I want to be. I want to be planted by the stream. When there is a drought, when there is a challenge, I want to still be alive. I want my leaves to still be green. I want my branches to still be reaching toward the Lord. I want to still be filled with life. So how is it that we accomplish this. How is it that we enter into this season, where we are the tree planted by the stream? Well, it's all about relationship, my friends. It's all about relationship with the Lord. Reading scripture, studying scripture, this is Jesus' love letter to us. These are His inspired

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words. If you have a question on how to live your life, open up your bible and you will find an answer as to how and what you're to do. It's as simple as that.

Now, I know it's not something that we as Catholics, I know for myself I was never catechized in the bible. It's something I've come to love and understand as an adult. And we have a wonderful opportunity to pass this knowledge on to the next generation, so that they might know the love of the Lord, that they might know what the rulebook is, you know. This is the handbook for life, the bible. So, you want to be the tree standing by the stream. Because when the challenges come, and they will come, when the sin creeps into our life, when we turn our face from the Lord, when we make decisions against Him, if we know who He is, then we can turn back, we can ask forgiveness, and that watering can of mercy gets poured down on us yet again, and we remain alive.

So as we go to the Responsorial Psalm, again, it is all about hope. It's Psalm 1, verse 1-2, 3 and 4, and 6, and it says ***Blessed are they who hope in the Lord.*** I mean, that can be your praise every morning when you get up. "Blessed are they who hope in the Lord. Blessed are they who hope in the Lord." If you keep that as your mantra throughout the day, imagine how it changes your perspective when you begin to see blessing instead of challenge. Take that for action. Use that. Pick a scripture from the daily readings, repeat it to yourself, remind yourself of it throughout the day, and see how it changes your perspective. You might be surprised at how fruitful this Lent can be for you with just a little change in perspective.

But the Psalm goes on to say ***Blessed be the man who follows not the counsel of the wicked, nor walks in the way of sinners, nor sits in the company of the insolent, but delights in the law of the Lord, and meditates on His law day and night.*** That's all about reading scripture. We're meditating upon God. We're getting to know Him, right, and He's getting to know us and our hearts. ***He is like a tree planted near running water that yields its fruit in due season.*** We all have fruit to bear, my friends. All of us. We all have something that God has placed upon our heart, that He is working within us, so that we might bear fruit to bring glory and honor to Him.

But in order to do that, we must be in relationship, we must be listening, we must be learning. We must be leaning in, stretching those branches out, waiting for the rain to come, so that when the wind comes and the storm comes, our roots are solidly bound. They are in that dirt and they are gripping, because they know truth. And when the wind whispers, all the lies, and all the deceit, and all the challenge, and when Satan presses us down and wants us to turn our face from God, and

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wants us to turn away from His word, we stand strong, because we have spent so much time knowing it and learning it and loving it. This is the beauty of scripture.

In today's gospel, Jesus introduces us to a Pharisee who is very wealthy. And every time he passes the gate to his home, there is a poor man named Lazarus there begging for scraps. And he totally ignores Lazarus. He's all about himself. And every day he passes him. And finally, he comes to the night where he dies and he ends up in hell, and he looks up and he sees Lazarus in the bosom of Abraham. And he calls out, and he asks and begs Abraham for Lazarus to dip his finger into the water of everlasting life, just so that this Pharisee could have a little water because the fires of hell are hot, and he wants some consolation.

And Abraham says "You had all you had during your life. Lazarus had nothing. And so, therefore, he now has everything, and you, who have made your choice to seek wickedness, to seek selfishness, to seek money over God now have what you deserve." So then the Pharisee begs Abraham and send an angel to go to his brothers, who are still alive, and speak to them and try and convince them to make a different choice in their life, and Abraham says something very interesting. He says "If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone should rise from the dead." What does that mean? He's simply saying "We've already given you everything you needed. You have scripture, you have the bible, you have the church, you have the sacraments, you have everything you need. And yet if you still reject it, there is a price to pay, and that is eternal damnation."

"So I have sent all who I am going to send. Pay attention. Listen." It's a wakeup call to you and I to pay attention and listen to the Lord in our life. Where is He leading you? What is it He needs you to do? How does He need you to serve? And when those storms come, and you're serving, and you're on task, and you're moving forward, and you're doing what you know you're meant to do. And the challenge comes, and the whispers of the wind come, and Satan wants to take you off course, you stand firm with those roots, and you stand firm, reaching into the stream of everlasting life, into the truth, and you say "Not today, because I know who God is." Blessed are those who hope in the Lord. Blessed are those who hope in the Lord, for they shall have mercy. They shall know eternal life.

My friends, you are on a journey, a 40 day Lenten journey. Do you have hope in the Lord? If not, why? What is it that you need to do to restore your hope in Christ? We have the sacrament of reconciliation. Use it. Go, frequent it. We have the sacrament of the Eucharist. Receive the food of everlasting life. Those 2 sacraments alone restore our hope in Christ. You have an opportunity to dig deeper into scripture, to spend some more time, quiet time. Do so. We have the 3 pillars of

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Lent, which are alms giving to the poor, prayer, and fasting. So take advantage of those 3 pillars. Dig deeper into scripture, spend time in prayer, listen to the still, small voice of our Lord speaking to you, fast - fast in reparation for your sin and the sin of others - and then give alms to the poor. Find the Lazarus in your life and show them mercy. Show them grace.

It doesn't matter what's happened up until this day in your Lenten journey. Today is a new day. You can start again. And so I encourage you to do so. As long as there is breath in your body, you have a second chance, and praise God for that. Blessed are those who hope in the Lord. That is all that we are to do, my friends, as we walk toward the greatest moment in salvation history: The resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ, who gives us the ultimate hope of an eternal life with Him. Thank you so much for joining me today. May you have a blessed and fruitful Lent.