

Take Time to Wonder

Glorious and majestic are his deeds, and his righteousness endures forever (Psalm 111:3).

Scripture: Psalm 111

Song: “Nobody Loves Me Like You”

On the horizon the tiny glow inched its way into view. The beauty took my breath away and brought tears to my eyes. God’s new day was dawning before me after I’d felt called to that spot to watch His power unfold. Darkness faded as light filled the sky. Magnificent colors were projected, and I felt as if the Creator himself was greeting me. I was humbled and awed by the glory that unfolded in the sky.

Sometimes we get so caught up in the day-to-day busyness of our lives that we lose our sense of wonder. We can let the majesty of His works become mundane to us or we don’t even notice. Psalm 111 was written to praise God and thank Him for all He has created and done for us. It reminds us that everything He does is meant to reveal His glory and majesty.

Don’t miss the beauty that God has created around you. Take time today to view God’s handiwork. Look for the simple ways He offers you an invitation to experience His love and goodness. May you be filled with admiration and wonder as you experience the handiwork of our God.

Father, thank You for this majestic world, which reminds us of Your awesomeness. In Jesus’ name, amen.

April 19–25. **Sarah Sanford** lives in Connecticut. She is a third-grade teacher. She enjoys spending time with friends and family and is an active member of her local church.

Who Is Watching?

People from all languages and nations will . . . say, “Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you” (Zechariah 8:23).

Scripture: Zechariah 8:18-23

Song: “Love Them Like Jesus”

“Let me tell you one more time: Please stop doing that. You are disturbing others and making it hard for them to learn.” This is a common speech heard by my third-grade students. Every day I enter the classroom doors with the best of intentions, but things often go awry within the first half hour. As I watch their faces and body language, I can quickly tell they are tuning me out and my voice is becoming nothing more than a clanging cymbal. “Blah, blah, blah” is probably the sound they hear in their heads.

Our reading today reminds us that every day we are setting an example for others. Zechariah, the prophet, is foretelling that people from different nations will see how God has rewarded His people for their faithfulness—and they will want to be included in the blessings. When people see God in you, they are attracted to the source of your joy and peace. The way we live our lives is often the best witness to our faith. We are setting an example every day, whether we think people are noticing or not.

Take time to reflect on your actions and words. Before you speak, think how it will be received. Today let God’s goodness emanate from you so that those around you may experience a taste of God’s love and grace.

Father, may my words and actions reflect a heart filled with Your truth, peace, and joy. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Our Unchangeable God

You, LORD, sit enthroned forever; your renown endures through all generations (Psalm 102:12).

Scripture: Psalm 102:12-22

Song: “God of All My Days”

It is said that there is nothing guaranteed in life except change. Several years ago I had some major life changes occur all within a year. I started graduate school, my oldest daughter graduated from high school and entered college, and I went through a divorce. With these events, financial, physical, and emotional adjustments occurred in my household. We all felt stressed and fragile. Through it all, however, my faith in our never-changing God was secure and unwavering. I remembered how He had held me through trials in the past, and I was confident He would remain faithful in those days.

The psalmist reminds us that God never changes. His faithfulness endures from generation to generation. Oh, that we would remember this in the midst of our chaotic lives that are always changing! Our jobs, our relationships, our houses, and so forth may change, but we can't change the love of God. The message from today's song reminds us that as we're moving through life, watching seasons come and go, our God remains the same.

Run today to the faithful God who is sitting on His throne forever. No matter what you're going through, He wants to protect you, stand by you, and love you with open arms. Trust Him, remember all He has done for you in the past, and cling to the promises He makes for your future.

Father, thank You that as life changes, You never do. Help me to rest in You today. In Jesus' name, amen.

Look to God for Help

Help us, God our Savior, for the glory of your name (Psalm 79:9).

Scripture: Psalm 79

Song: “Be Still”

December 14, 2012 will vividly remain in my memory. That day 6 teachers and 20 students were killed in an elementary school in Newtown, Connecticut. At the time of that horrific incident, I was an assistant principal in an elementary school about 20 miles from Newtown. That event impacted me on many levels—personally, professionally, and spiritually. Colleagues, parents, and family questioned how this could happen. What would make a young man do such an incredibly unimaginable act? Beyond those thoughts and discussions, however, often came, How could God allow the death of so many innocent children?

This is the same cry found in Psalm 79. People have died, their temple has been left in ruins, and lands have been conquered. They have nothing left, and they are feeling forgotten by their God. Additionally, their conquerors are asking, “Where is their God?” In our key verse, the psalmist turns these cries into a cry to God for help. He asks God to help them for the glory of His name.

When events occur that we can’t understand and we are left shaking our heads in disbelief, we need to turn our eyes to God. We may not always receive answers, but our trust must remain in God. Ask God to open your heart and mind to His ways today and be confident that even in the worst of times, He is in control.

Father, help us to keep our eyes on You and not on the circumstances surrounding us. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Death Is Not the End

Death has climbed in through our windows and has entered our fortresses (Jeremiah 9:21).

Scripture: Jeremiah 9:17-22

Song: “What a Friend We Have in Jesus”

Jeremiah is known as the Weeping Prophet. His purpose was to proclaim God’s message and to urge the people of Judah to turn from their sins and return to God. They were being offered an opportunity to repent and experience revival. In our verses, the prophet is explicitly describing the death, and subsequent grief and sorrow, that will result as a consequence of not turning from their sinful ways.

In our key verse, Jeremiah vividly describes death as having “climbed in through our windows” and “entered our fortresses.” Death is an inescapable event. No matter how strong we are, death will eventually come to us and those we love. However, like the people of Judah, we have an opportunity to experience revival. Our revival has been accomplished through the death of Jesus Christ. We only need to believe in Him and confess our sins, and He will give us everlasting life.

Joseph Scriven wrote today’s song after his fiancée drowned on the night before their wedding. He wrote the words that are so familiar to us, “What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear,” to heal from his pain. If fear has invaded your heart, turn to the Savior today. Open your heart to Him and remember: He is your friend who is waiting to bear your sins and ease your fear.

Father, thank You that in You we need have no fear, even of death. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Great Is His Faithfulness

[God's compassions] are new every morning; great is your faithfulness (Lamentations 3:23).

Scripture: Lamentations 3:22-33

Song: "Faithful God"

"Every day is a fresh start." "Let the past remain in the past, and live for the future." These are just a couple of the expressions we are told throughout life. As a teacher I tell my students, when they are discouraged or misbehaving, that we can turn ourselves around and start anew at any time. All we must do is change our mind-set and move on.

I hope my words to the students are inspirational. If we truly lived them, our lives would hold less stress, less anger, and a lot more joy and peace. But sometimes I don't follow my own words. I hold grudges, let emotions bury themselves deep in my heart, and move forward with the proverbial chip on my shoulder.

Scholars suggest that Lamentations was written as a funeral song for the great capital of Jerusalem. It had been destroyed, the king was gone, and the people had been moved into exile. Despite all this, Jeremiah tells them in our passage that God's mercies begin afresh each morning. Let that be the voice that shouts loudest into your heart today. Don't dwell on all the wrongs and mishaps that have happened to you. Open your heart to God's love and faithfulness. Rejoice in the freshness of a new day to make amends, show mercy, and live in God's unfailing love.

Father, may we stand firm in Your love and never forget that Your mercies are new every morning. In Jesus' name, amen.

God Is Our Restorer

Restore us to yourself, LORD, that we may return; renew our days as of old (Lamentations 5:21).

Scripture: Lamentations 5:1-22

Song: “Restore My Soul”

My grandfather restored antiques. At estate and rummage sales, he would pick through what others might consider junk and envision what it could be. I would watch him work. First, he would sand pieces down to strip away polish, paint, dirt, and dust that had accumulated over the years. When the piece was down to its naked form, he would begin the restoration process. The finished product of his labor of love would be a magnificent, new piece of furniture. He had the ability to take something old and worn out and restore it to its original beauty and purpose.

In Lamentations 5, Jeremiah pleaded for restoration. Jeremiah realized that only God makes things right. He had watched Jerusalem and its people be stripped of all their glory. There were consequences for years of neglect and selfishness.

Like the old furniture that needed my grandfather, we need the Lord, our healer, to take our broken pieces and restore them to their original glory. If you are feeling beaten down, worn out, and lacking joy, turn to your Father in Heaven. Cry out to Him and ask Him for restoration. He loves you and wants to ease your suffering. He longs not only to bring you back into His arms but also to restore you to the life He has planned for you.

Father, please restore in me the hope You alone can give for a life filled with joy and peace. In Jesus' name, amen.