

THE LINK

ATLANTIC NCFC NEWSLETTER

MARCH, 2018

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29 Bedell Ave.

Saint John, NB, E2K 2C1

March 2018

Dear Friends,

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. This is the Lenten Season, when Christians prepare for Easter. People choose to prepare in many different ways.

The important thing is that whatever you choose should bring you closer to God. It is a time when your relationship to God should deepen and you should feel bathed in love, peace and joy.

Your journey this Lent should bring you closer to Christ and His suffering as He journeyed to Jerusalem. May you all have a deeper understanding of that suffering and may that journey lead to a blessed Easter and may your time of preparation be a deep and meaningful experience revealing the grace of God to you in a new and marvellous way. Blessings to all as you complete your Lenten journey.

Betty Hitchcock

Marvelous grace of our loving Lord,  
Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt,  
Yonder on Calvary's mount outpoured,  
There where the blood of the Lamb was spilt.

Grace, Grace, God's Grace, Grace that will pardon and cleanse within;  
Grace, Grace, God's Grace, Grace that is greater than all our sin.

## STUDY FOR MARCH

Mark 14: 35-38 [Revised Standard Version]

35 – And going a little further, he threw himself on the ground prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.

36 – He said, “Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet not what I want but what you want.”

37 –He came and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, “ Simon are you asleep? Could you not wait one hour?”

38 – Keep awake and pray giving that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

Study:

Jesus is spending some time in prayer with His Father and had taken some of the disciples with him and asked them to wait a bit apart while he prayed,

35 – What did Jesus do? Why did he throw himself on the ground? What is your normal position for prayer? What was Jesus’ prayer?

36 - How did Jesus address God? What is the significance of this? What did he say about God? Do you believe that with God all things are possible? Do our actions show this? What does Jesus request? How does he end the prayer?

37 –What did Jesus find when he came back to where the disciples were? What did he say? Have you ever felt he was saying something similar to you? Is there any significance to ‘one hour’?

38 – What did Jesus say in this verse? He is speaking to the disciples here but can you hear him speaking to us too?

## BEAUTY

When we turn that page of the calendar and see MARCH, our expectations of birds returning and of warmer days are more real and our hopes of new life, fresh growth and natural beauty take on a new dimension. Spring speaks to us of many things but perhaps what dominates the season is the miracle of new life and the beauty and colour that replace the drabness. The bare tree branches produce leaves and the yellow tamarack changes its coat to a luxurious green. When you hear or read the word “beauty” what pictures and experiences are conjured up in your mind?

With these thoughts in our head, let’s transfer our thinking from the natural to the spiritual. A more-than-casual look is helpful for us as we see the One Who in Song of Solomon is called the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley. Poets and song writers have described Jesus many ways: “beautiful Saviour”, “we shall see the King in His beauty”, “let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me”.

In contrast to Solomon’s words we read from Isaiah who says, “...He has no form or comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him.” Contradictions? Isaiah was prophesying Jesus’ death. He is described here as He would be when He gave His life on the cross. The real beauty of a person has little to do with what is visible to the eye. Jesus has a beauty that bears no relationship to His physical appearance when He bore my sins and yours at His crucifixion.

When we walk through some events in the life of Jesus we will see some attributes that show us His beauty - a beauty that far surpasses anything that can be “seen”. One of the attributes that made Him a beautiful Person was His consideration of others. The place was Mount Calvary. Many people were crowding in to witness the crucifixion of three men. Followers of the Man on the middle cross were experiencing shattered dreams. Hopes were gone. In that dreadful moment, Mary and John stood close. Jesus’ concern for His mother would be heavy on His heart. How would she manage? Would she have enough money to buy food? Could she live alone? Jesus had been through so much. But in this time of intense suffering, His greatest concern was for others. In that moment, with death so near, His mother’s eyes locked with His. She heard Him say, “Woman, behold thy son. “ And as His eyes moved to John, He said, “Behold thy mother.” With loving concern He commissioned him to take responsibility for Mary. ...The beauty of Compassion.

In Matthew’s Gospel we read an interesting account of a dialogue between Jesus and the religious leaders. Having spent the night in Bethany, Jesus had returned to Jerusalem and had gone to the temple. There He was approached by the chief priests and elders who questioned His authority. Jesus used parables to draw them into a discussion in which He gave them a history lesson on the way the prophets from God had been treated by the religious leaders over the years. When the leaders realized Jesus was speaking about them they became angry. The Sadducees entered the fray and they all tried to trick Jesus with their questions. Jesus got them to the place where they could not answer His questions and they didn’t dare ask Him any more. Jesus became severe in His statements. “You hypocrites! On the outside you appear righteous: on the inside you are full of sin. You kill, scourge, and persecute the prophets and wise men God has

sent to you.” And then, as the sins of His people swept over Him His demeanor changed. He became broken and He cried, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.” Brokenness over sin is a beautiful attribute.

It had been a day of excitement. Throngs of people had gathered in Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles - a thanksgiving harvest festival, Jesus had taught in the temple and people marveled at His knowledge and authority. They argued among themselves, some saying, ”When the Christ comes will he do more miracles than this Man?”, others declaring, ”No prophet can come out of Galilee.” And all the while the Pharisees and chief priests plotted His arrest. Evening was approaching. The celebration was over. The people dispersed. Jesus, emotionally drained and physically exhausted went to the Mount of Olives to spend the night. As dawn began to break Jesus left the Mount and returned to the temple area. Already crowds had filled the temple grounds. Jesus sat down and began to teach them. After a time there was a commotion. The people were distracted and began to strain to see what was happening. All eyes fell on a woman being forced into Jesus’ presence by some teachers of the law and some Pharisees. This was another devious trap they had set for Him. As a hush fell over the crowd, a condemning voice shouted, “This woman was caught in the very act of adultery. Moses’ law demands she be stoned to death. What do you say?” The crowds waited. Jesus stooped and wrote in the sand. The Pharisees continued to question Him. Then Jesus stood and spoke those words that smote every conscience. “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.” When all had slipped away Jesus said, “Woman, has no one condemned you? Neither do I condemn you. Go, and leave your life of sin”. The beauty of Forgiveness. Divine and human.

One day Jesus and His disciples and a large crowd that had gathered around Him, left Capernaum and traveled toward a little Galilean town called Nain. As Jesus approached the town gate He saw another large crowd leaving the town. Soon it became evident that it was a funeral procession. A young man had died - the only son of his mother and she was a widow. Jesus had never seen either of them before and probably would never meet that widow again. What were they to Him? Why not move aside and let the procession pass? Then He could go through the gate and carry on His work in Nain. But Jesus’ heart was moved by the heaviness and sadness of that mother’s heart. Perhaps He was thinking of another mother whose Son was to die in just a short time. As His eyes met hers He said, “Don’t cry.” Can you imagine what your reaction might have been? Don’t cry. How can You say don’t cry? Don’t You realize ..... As she saw this Man place His hand on the coffin and the people carrying it stand still, she heard the Man speak again. “Young men, I say to you, get up!” At once the man sat up and began to talk. And Jesus gave him back to his mother. The beauty of Consolation.

During the time that Jesus and his disciples were in the Upper Room, He had many things to teach them. One of those things was humility. They had gathered to share their last meal together. The darkest hour in history was approaching. Judas had already agreed to look for a chance to betray Him. Jesus is facing desertion, suffering and death. In this hour of Jesus’ unspeakable heaviness the disciples were fighting among themselves; arguing about which of them was considered the greatest! All eyes rested on Jesus as He got up from the table. So concerned about their own status not one disciple had taken the responsibility of acting as host.

Not one would stoop to wash another's feet. Jesus took off His outer garment, wrapped a towel around His waist, poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and wipe them with the towel. To teach His followers humility He said, "You call Me Master and Lord; and you say well for that is what I am. If I then, your Lord and Master have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that you should do as I have done to you." The beauty of Humility.

The Last Supper had ended. Jesus and His disciples left the Upper Room, crossed the Kidron Valley and entered the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives. This is where Jesus fought and won the battle of obedience. We are moved when we hear Him say that His soul is heavy, sorrowful even to death. He knew His disciples would scatter and abandon Him. He was so alone. And there in the garden He fell with His face to the ground and prayed, "O My Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will. If it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may Your will be done." Beautiful Obedience.

Jesus' prayer life is a part of His character that shows us His beauty. He retreated often to the mountain to pray. He prayed for His followers. He said, "I pray not for these alone but also for those who will believe in Me through their message." He prayed in the garden, from the cross and He prays in heaven. We're told in Hebrews 7: 24,25 ... because Jesus lives forever ... He is able to save completely and forever those who come to God through Him, because He always lives to intercede for them. Consider His prayer for Peter during the Last Supper. "Simon, Simon, behold Satan has desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail. And when you have returned to me, strengthen your brothers." The beauty of Prayer.

What better reveals the beauty of Jesus than His love. We celebrate the Resurrection and it is a glorious time. But we cannot think of the Resurrection without considering all the tragic events that preceded it. We might ask over and over, Why? Why did He have to endure all the hatred, the physical torture, the spiritual agony, death by crucifixion? The one word that answers our questions is Love. At the cross, during those intense moments charged with all the emotions known to humanity, Love surpassed them all. John put it this way in chapter 13, v.1. Having loved His own who were in the world, He now showed them the full extent of His love. Is there anything more beautiful than love?

A Scripture in Romans 6, the last part of verse four, reads, ... "just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life." As we experience new life in Christ Jesus, He enables us to follow His example and helps us to let Him develop in us those attributes that show others His beauty - a beauty that bears no relationship to our appearance.

Eternal Father, with the hymn writer we would pray: Jesus, Rose of Sharon, bloom within my heart. Take from our lives all that does not honour You. May the beauty of Jesus be seen in us. Amen.

The above article was written and submitted by Joyce Cogswell, a retired nurse in Saint John.

## PRAYER

One of the essential parts of our daily devotional time with God is prayer. Part of prayer [and the part people think about first] is us talking to God, praising Him for who he is and what He means to us, telling Him about our experiences and asking Him for what we and others need. However, the part where we listen to God and hear His direction for us is just as important and probably more important. Part of this involves waiting quietly in His presence and being open to receiving His love, peace and comfort, allowing them to enfold us like a warm blanket. It also involves having our mind open to hear His direction for us. This may come in the form of a realization of what a certain passage of scripture means for us, a stirring in our soul about something important that we need to do, or the still small voice of God confirming that we are on the right path and that He is with us now and forever. What is your prayer time like? Is there anything that would enhance you time with God?

### Prayer for Today

Dear God,

Open our ears, to hear what you are saying to us today,

Open our eyes, to see where Jesus' healing love is needed in our world.

Open our hands, to do your work and help where help is needed.

Open our lips, to bring comfort, joy, and laughter to your people.

Open our minds, to hear new truths about how You work in our world.

Open our hearts, to love you, our neighbors and ourselves

As You love us. Amen.



## UPDATE ON HEALTH AND THE LINK

You may have realized, and I hope you have, that the September and December issues of The Link were missing this year. That is because I was in hospital for three months and unable to put out those issues. I had an extremely bad reaction to one of the drugs in my chemotherapy. As a result, I had neuropathy of my hands and feet with no feeling in either fingers or toes. For the first ten weeks of my hospitalization, I could not even move a toe and was feeling that I would never walk again and never be able to return home. That was a very difficult time for me, but I knew that God was there with me in that hospital room and that He would never leave me. After about two months on the cancer unit, I was sent to the rehab unit where I was for about six weeks. There I had physiotherapy twice a day for about four hours and occupational therapy two hours a day. Finally I was able to come home. I still have the neuropathy in both hands and feet and am told that this will probably never improve and that I would have to learn to live with it. I use a walker to get around the house with special shoes and a brace for my right leg. My fingers have no feeling and I tend to drop most items I pick up. My writing looks worse than kindergarten. My computer skills are poor and it takes so much more time to even write a sentence. However, I am home and have help with housekeeping and receive meals on wheels. I am so thankful for all who have prayed and sent cards and notes.

I still have the kidney area to deal with and saw the kidney surgeon last week. He tells me the results of the biopsy reveal a tumor that could be cancer or not – so I will have another CAT scan. When I came home I thought about the visit and suddenly felt bathed in God's love and peace. It was a peace which indeed did pass all understanding, Praise be to God!!!!

Betty Hitchcock

The Atlantic Committee of NCF Canada will be meeting in May to plan for the future. Please remember this meeting in your prayers

Submissions for The Link

Submissions are always welcome. If something has been meaningful to you, please think of sharing it with others – submit it for inclusion in the Link. You are invited to submit articles, letters, poems, etc. to be included in future issues of the Link. Please send submissions to Betty Hitchcock, 29 Bedell Ave., Saint John, NB, E2K 2C1 or email to [betty.hitchcock@rogers.com](mailto:betty.hitchcock@rogers.com)