

THE FIRST FRUITS OF THE NEW CREATION

PSALM 139:1-12 // ROMANS 8:12-25 NIV



MONDAY 7/24/23

PSALM 39:1-12 // 1 You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. 2 You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.

ROMANS 8:12-25 // 12 Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. 13 For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. 14 For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.

REFLECTION the first fruits of the new creation come from being united with Jesus Christ. As a result we have become adopted children of God. We are no longer in debt to our sins but have become indebted to the Spirit. Let me explain. Born from above people are led by the Spirit of God. As God's children we are set free and no longer a slave to the desires of our old sinful nature. Instead we have the Spirit of God guiding us and helping us to walk the path to eternal life. No one can please God without first receiving the Holy Spirit. Eph. 4:30 30 "And do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live. God has identified you as his own. This is a guarantee that we will be saved on the day of redemption." To live with this guarantee sets us free to serve the one we love. Galatians 5:24-25 24 "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. 25 Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives." This major shift in our lives causes us to turn away from the passions of the flesh. Staying close to Jesus is not difficult when the Spirit comes alive in our hearts and minds. This force of God settles in our minds and we leave behind our old nature. In doing so we become witnesses of our faith by loving God and one another. When we are pressed upon by God's Spirit we are marked by our acknowledging Christ as a living sacrifice for our sins. We too will be resurrected with Him on the Last Day. As sisters and brothers in Christ we now share in the Holy Sacraments showing the world our love for God.

PRAYER Lord Jesus, you searched me and you know me. You know my name and every hair on my head. Thank you for bringing me into your presence. I no longer perceive you from afar. In Jesus Name, Amen

TUESDAY 7/25/23

PSALM 39:1-12 // 3 You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. 4 Before a word is on my tongue you, Lord, know it completely.

ROMANS 8:12-25 // 15 The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

REFLECTION As the "first fruits" we are the visible sign of God's grace. We are adopted children for the purpose of sharing the good news of Jesus Christ to the world. This very blessed activity of the Spirit in us gives us a new life advancing God's saving grace to others. The "first fruits of the Spirit" is also demonstrated in the calming effect we gain from being restored in our souls. Our minds are not so restless and a tranquil state comes upon us as we humble ourselves before God. We now cry out with confidence to Abba, our Father. This confidence and freedom is not based on our works to be good, but only from God's grace offered by Christ. Our confidence blossoms as we accept being sealed by God's unwarranted pardon. So now we have the ability to be engaged by the Spirit. When the Spirit occupies our souls we are freed from the "spirit of bondage" which comes from hearing the law. Secondly, the Spirit invites us to receive the "spirit of adoption" resulting in hearing the gospel. The first produces fear, and the second grants us the assurance of God's forgiveness. The Spirit confirms in us the Son of God has come from heaven and brought these invaluable gifts. We are no longer chained to the dutiful conditions of the law. The truth is, before Christ came there was no "spirit of adoption" for us the Gentiles. We all were slaves and servants under the law. Being set free by Christ makes us the "adopted children" of the heavenly court.

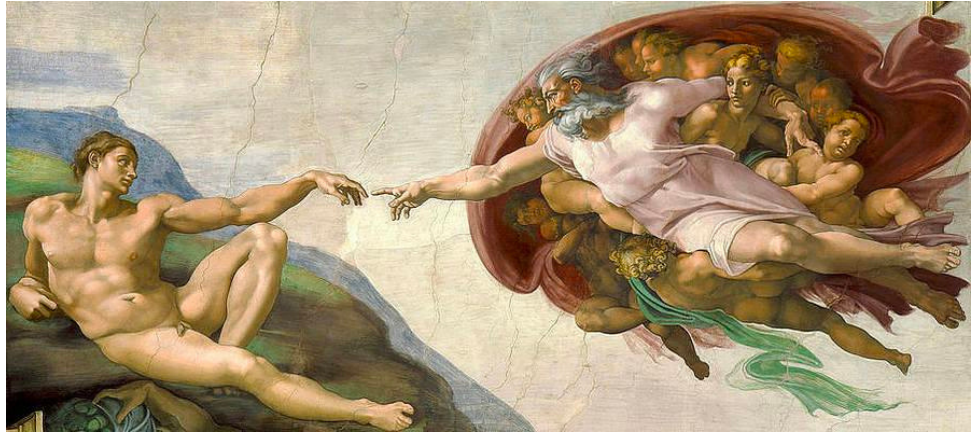
PRAYER Lord Jesus, you see my life and know me. You are with me when I wake, and you are beside me when I sleep. Guide my hand and feet this day so I may better learn to live in your ways. Thank you Lord Jesus. In Jesus Name, Amen

WEDNESDAY 7/26/23

PSALM 39:1-12/// 5 You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me. 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.

ROMANS 8:12-25/// 17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

REFLECTION It is clear the Holy Spirit has many roles. First, the “Spirit of bondage” convicts us of the Law. He convicts us by pressing upon our hearts the guilt and shame of our activities. But, more blessedly, the “Spirit of adoption” brings us to faith in Christ. The Spirit affords us a new “spiritual birth” that changes our minds about God’s love for us. The Spirit will continue to work in us and be our guide and teacher. As the Spirit of truth is poured into our hearts our souls come alive. We gain confidence and dare call God our Father. Each day we live in God’s grace we gain more and more confidence to praise our Father. John Calvin states; “if there is no Spirit in us our tongues would be dumb, so that they could utter no prayers”. If the Spirit of Christ “did not live in us” we would not pray, nor praise God. So even more amazing is the Spirit who daily helps convince us we are “heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ.” Take a moment and let that sink in. As God’s children we are to inherit the Kingdom of God! God has desired to adopt us from the beginning. As His children we are ordained to receive and inherit. God first promised this to Abraham (Gen 15) and it is the most heavenly, incorruptible and eternal promise ever given. Jesus Christ was sent to fulfill this promise. And now we are Christ’s very own possession. We are promised by Christ we will partake in the new heaven and new earth. John 14:5-7 “5 Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” 6 Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7 If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.”



PRAYER Gracious God, you surround me and lay your gentle hand of grace upon me. Your Son and Spirit are far more wonderful to me than words can express. Praise you for my inheritance. In Jesus Name, Amen

THURSDAY 7/27/23

PSALM 39:1-12/// 7 Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? 8 If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.

ROMANS 8:12-25///19 For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. 20 For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

REFLECTION When the Spirit of Christ lives in us we begin to embrace the deeper mysteries of our faith. When I read “creation itself will be liberated” it give me pause. Think about this and what it is saying. When sin entered life on the earth all living things became filled with a deep despair and a sense of hopelessness. The whole of creation groaned in distress. Everything has been effected by the vulgarity of sin. Life itself is seized with great anxiety and we are held in suspense. The lion eats the calf, while the mother watches in distress. The parent leaves the child to seeking attention and love in other places. One day all of God’s wisdom will be gloriously revealed. According to St. John; 1 John 3:2”Dear friends, we are already God's children, but he has not yet shown us what we will be like when Christ appears. But we do know that we will be like him, for we will see him as he really is.”

PRAYER Lord Jesus, I was at one time haunted by the truth; no matter where I went your Spirit was with me. I tried to flee from your presence. When I made my bed of sin, you grabbed my hand and lifted me out. Blessed is the name of my Lord Jesus Christ. In Jesus Name, Amen

FRIDAY 7/28/23

PSALM 39:1-12/// 9 If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.”

ROMANS 8:12-25///22 We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. 23 Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.

REFLECTION There is deep emotional, physical and spiritual pain in this corrupt world. In addition our sinful desires drive us to hurt others and we move further away from our Creator. Thank goodness there is another force at work among us. It is the desire of God's love to set us free from this corrupt state. We all groan, at times, and want to be delivered from the effects of sin. These groans show up in our addictions, our depressions, our behaviors. This inward groaning causes all sorts of pains and anxieties. In our distress we pine away seeking a remedy. At last, and at great lengths, God brings forth a joyful blessing by uniting us with His Son. We are joined into a right relationship with our Lord. This means we have been illuminated by the Spirit of God. Now we strive ahead with hope and a desire to attain the great benefits of salvation. As adopted children we bear the “first fruits” of the new creation. In one sense we are still burdened by our present misery. On the other hand we wait patiently for our deliverance. We now have a certain hope and great expectations about our future. We are blessed by His grace who brings our minds out of the darkness and elevates our hearts above our present miseries. These beginnings or first-fruits, are only a fore-taste of the life to come.

PRAYER Heavenly Father your left hand guides me and your right hand holds me fast. Blessed is my God who creates all things new. Blessed is my God for you hold my future in your hands. In Jesus Name, Amen

SATURDAY 7/29/23

PSALM 39:1-12/// 11 If I say, “Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me, even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.”

ROMANS 8:12-25///24 for in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? 25 But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

REFLECTION Today I want to remind you of your salvation in Christ. Christians should be solid in knowing we cannot be separated from Christ. Once we have bonded with him by the Spirit we are inseparable. (Perseverance of faith) Our hope then is in Christ who is our redeemer. This truth extends far beyond our mind's capacity to fathom. So, our hope rests in a promise given by God to bring us home. God promised Abraham his inheritance is sealed in heaven. As we look to the future we cannot fully understand all that will take place. We do know the redemptive purpose of Christ's life is to give us this eternal hope. From this hope soon comes patience. Christ invites us to spend our lives learning to be patient as we bear our cross and confront the tribulations of everyday life. The truth is, patience is an inseparable companion of faith. When we find our soul to be comforted, it is based on our faith, hope and love in Christ. Our present miseries are softened and our anxieties are readily reduced and eliminated.

PRAYER Lord God when you created the earth and the heavens you brought light out of the darkness. When your Devine Son came to us in the flesh He too cast out the darkness with the light of your salvation. Praise you for helping me await patiently for your Son's return. In Jesus Name, Amen



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Rev Bruce J VanDer Kolk