

THE GOOD NEWS GAZETTE

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Think on these things...

Philippians 4:8-9

FIRST FRUITS

My husband and I returned from our week long vacation in early June to find the grass knee high. Unusually, it rained almost every day we were away. The weeds grew tall beside the flowers in my flower bed. All the plants seemed to have grown exponentially. All that is except my rose bush. A bare half dozen medium size roses adorned the bush. As I approached one of the blooms, I eagerly anticipated the sweet fragrance I remembered. When I inhaled slowly, I was surprised at the faintness of the scent. Choosing another fuller bloom, I alerted my mind and my nose to pay attention to my next attempt at the rose's sweet smell. Inhaling deeply, and with my eyes closed to focus, once again I found the scent lacking the robust fragrance I expected.

One of my favorite plants in the flower bed, this rose bush has been with me almost 15 years. Not a great gardener, I planted it carefully then trusted God and the ground to give it the water and nourishment it needed throughout the years. Over time it has adjusted itself and leaned forward to catch more of the sunlight it craves on the South side of my house. It produces beautiful long-stemmed pink roses that generally have a strong, sweet scent. When it first bloomed this spring, I was amazed at the number of buds it set. The leaves were healthy and lush. Once open, the blooms were huge! In its first bloom, there were over two dozen roses. Each rose the size of two fists put



together gave off a wonderful smell from many feet away. I cut many of the flowers to make sweet smelling arrangements for my home and office before I went on vacation.

The flowers I beheld after returning from vacation were nice, but nothing in comparison to the first fruits of the bush. This prompted me to think more about first fruits. Are the first fruits of a plant the best fruits? My rose bush seemed to have better roses with its first blooms. My research on the internet did not come up with any definitive answers, but it seems likely by my experiences.

Thinking about first fruits recalled to mind that the Bible talks about the topic in both the Old and New Testaments. Proverbs 3:9-10 says, "Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine." Exodus 22:29 says, "You shall not delay to offer from the fullness of your harvest and from the outflow of your presses. The firstborn of your sons you shall give to me." Before the Israelites ate of their harvest, they were to set apart the best of their first fruits to God including the first born of both man and beast. These verses indicate to me that there is a priority God wants his people to have for putting him first and serving him first.

In Genesis 4:2-5, we see the story of the offerings Cain and Abel brought to the Lord. In verse three of chapter four it says, "In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord. But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. Then the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door, it desires to have you, but you must master it." From these verses it appears that Cain had the knowledge of what kind of sacrifice was appropriate and right, but did not choose to give it to God. Noticing Cain's attitude, God gives him good counsel and opportunity to do right. As we know, Cain did not heed God's instructions. He let his anger and sin master him.

What about me? Do I give God the first fruits of my life? Do I offer the best of what I have and who I am? Do I heed God's instructions in how to please him? I'm sure I don't always.

What about God? What did he do for me?... for us all? John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." God gave his first fruit (His one and only Son) for me, and for all of us.

James 1:17 says, "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly light, who does not change like shifting shadows, He chose to give us birth through the word of truth that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created."

I can hardly wrap my mind around the fact that the Creator of everything, God Almighty, gave first his everything for me. Ephesians 4:1 says, "For he (God) chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ in accordance with his pleasure and will." Continuing on in Ephesians 5:1-2 Paul instructs Christians, "Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."

Like the first fruit of my scented rose bush, Jesus was the first fruit and fragrant offering for me from God. As I see my rose bush now and in the seasons to come, I hope it serves as a reminder of the priority God put on redeeming me with his precious Son. I also hope that I will be more mindful of what my priorities need to be in giving God the first fruits of my life.

I think on these things...

Robin Robbins House



DID YOU KNOW?

What does Jesus say to be careful about doing?

What should we not announce with trumpets?

What should be done in secret and why?

Who should we not imitate when praying?

Where does Jesus say to pray?

What does the heavenly Father know before we ask?

What does hallowed mean?

From what should we pray to be delivered?

What happens if we do not forgive?

Thought Question: Does our forgiving someone that sins against us depend on that sinner repenting?

Answers to these questions can be found in Matthew chapter six.

RECIPES

CORN CASSEROLE

INGREDIENTS

- 1 Can cream style corn
- 1 Can whole kernel corn, drained
- 1 Stick margarine, melted
- 8 oz. Sour cream
- 1 Box Jiffy Corn Muffin Mix
- 1/2 C Minced onion



INSTRUCTIONS

Mix sour cream, minced onion, melted margarine, creamed corn and whole kernel corn. Next add Jiffy mix and ingredients listed on box to first mixed ingredients. Spray casserole dish with not stick spray and pour in corn mixture. Bake 30-40 minutes at 350 degrees.

Submitted by Peggy Geddes

Please feel free to submit recipes, positive quotes, comments, etc. to
The Good News Gazette at thegoodnewsgazette1@gmail.com

M E M O R Y V E R S E

“But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him. For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life.”

II Corinthians 2:14-16



Photos by Robin Robbins House

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