

## **The Meyer Minute for April 1, 2002**

Keyword: Reposition

If Jesus were your typical American, what might He have done after Easter? Here's my guess. Monday morning He would have slept late. After all, last week had been brutal. He might have hung up His work clothes and donned something casual. Perhaps He'd even go up to Jerusalem Motors to buy an SUV. Really! With His work done he finally had time to travel around the country at a more leisurely pace. Ah, retirement!

I know, that's silly but here's the point: Jesus didn't retire. Easter is essential, of course. "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins." (1 Corinthians 15:17) But Easter wasn't the end for Jesus. He kept working: appearances through 40 days, Ascension, His Spirit poured out on Pentecost. He's still working today, active in His Church through Word and Sacrament. Retire? No. Jesus "repositioned."

Dear Jesus, reposition me for new service to You. Amen.

## **The Meyer Minute for April 2, 2002**

Keyword: Obey

Now that we're hearing "Play ball!" again...Do you know why a baseball field has coach's boxes, those chalk-lined areas near first and third base where the coaches stand?

Back in the 19th century there was a ballplayer named Arlie Latham, known as the "freshest man on the earth." When Latham coached, he ran wildly all up and down the basepath. He was so disruptive that the baseball bosses invented the coach's box and told him to stay in it.

The Bible teaches that you're saved by grace through faith, not by works. That doesn't mean that you can do whatever you want. God gave the Ten Commandments and all the other commands of the Bible to keep us in the right place, His place, His place of service to others. Like the coach's box, that's where God wants us to be found. Believe and be saved; obey and serve.

Spirit of God, help me live by Your commandments. Amen.

## **The Meyer Minute for April 3, 2002**

I know I'm out of sync with the season, but all the chaos, all the carnage between the Israelis and Palestinians takes me back to the Christmas carol, "Joy to the World." "He rules the world with truth and grace and makes the nations prove the glories of His righteousness and wonder of His love." Huh? There seems to be no evidence of that in the news from the Middle East.

"The glories of His righteousness" is the forgiveness that shines from the cross of Christ. "The wonders of His love" are the countless ways God graces our lives with help and hope. "Christ is our peace," Paul wrote, "who has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility." (Ephesians 2:14)

Today's keyword is "prove." As hostilities darken the news, they make they make the glories of God's rule of truth and grace all the more appealing to our hearts. In their warring ways, the nations are proving the glories of HIS righteousness, the wonders of HIS love.

## **The Meyer Minute for April 4, 2002**

Keyword: Looking for Jesus

"He is not here," announced the Easter angel.

Ah, I thought, how often I seek Jesus where He's not to be found! Crises come, crises of health, of relationships, of work and finances, and finally death. When we don't find God in the places we have predetermined He should be, we become disillusioned.

"He is not here; He has risen, just as He said...and is going ahead of you to Galilee." (Matthew 28:6-7) So He's out of the tomb, out also of our assumptions about God. Present in every crisis are His words and Spirit but they're inviting us to a better future. "He's going ahead of you." After all, to receive help and comfort from Him who says, "Come unto Me and I will give you rest, shouldn't you move forward in faith? "Follow Me," Jesus calls. "He has risen and is going ahead of you."

"Jesus, lead thou on." Amen.

## **The Meyer Minute for April 5, 2002**

Keyword: Enjoy!

How is it where you live? At home in southern Illinois I'm now waking up to hear the birds singing. I no longer have to bundle up to go out and get the newspaper. Forsythias and daffodils are in full bloom. The tulips are on deck. Bare branches of trees are beginning to show some hints of what is to come. Lawnmowers are starting up again; people working in their yards. Exercise amateurs have come out of winter hibernation and are trying to walk off, or jog off, or bicycle off the pounds of winter. Good luck!

Genesis chapter one tells how God created this wondrous world of nature that now is springing into bloom. Then Genesis 2:2 says, "On the seventh day God rested from all His work." What did God do on that day of rest? He enjoyed His creation. It was very good.

Take some time this weekend to enjoy His handiwork. After all, God did.

## **The Meyer Minute for April 8, 2002**

Keyword: Cathedral

Monday morning is tough enough...without a time change!

Time is a precious commodity. We talk about it that way, as a commodity, a thing. "I'm running short on time." "Can you spare me a minute?" Time as a thing.

Another assumption waiting to be disturbed! The Bible talks more about time as a place. The first commandment tells us to have no false god in our heart. The second or third commandment, depending on how you number them, says to revere God with our lips.

Heart...lips...what's next? "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." That is, after heart and lips, worship God in time. Time is not so much a thing; it's a place...of worship.

We all have the same amount of time each day. On Monday or any day, try looking at time as a place, your cathedral of thanks and service to God.

Spring forward...to deeper spirituality!

## **The Meyer Minute for April 9, 2002**

Keyword: Your Answer?

The Queen Mother is buried today. As pastor of a congregation, I'd call on the family after a death.

"Your loved one's body will be buried but it will be raised on Judgment Day." I'd say. 1 Corinthians 15:42 promises, "The body that is sown is perishable; it is raised imperishable."

"Your loved one's soul is already in heaven," I'd say, referring to Luke 23:32, "Today you will be with Me in paradise."

"You'll see your loved one again," I'd say, quoting 1 Thessalonians 4:17, "We will be with the Lord forever."

Now a church funeral, even for the Queen Mother, doesn't give salvation if a person doesn't believe. So I'd finally pass along Jesus' word and Jesus' question. "I am the resurrection and the life. The person who believes in Me will live." Then He asks, "Do you believe this?" (John 11:25-26)

Lord, lead me to believe. Amen.

## **The Meyer Minute for April 10, 2002**

Keyword: Creation

The United States Senate is debating whether or not to drill for oil in ANWAR, the "Alaskan National Wildlife Refuge."

Some information from the Bible: Pagan religions worship nature, "mother earth," but the Bible says nature is a creation, just as you and I are. In Genesis 1:26 God gave us dominion over nature. So Yes, we can drill but would it be responsible? Since we're sinners, we have often abused nature. In the case of ANWAR, can we be good caretakers of God's world and still drill?

"Almighty God, in giving us dominion over things on earth, You made us fellow workers in Your creation. Give us wisdom and reverence to use the resources of nature, so that no one may suffer from our abuse of them, and that generations yet to come may continue to praise You for Your bounty; through Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." Amen. (Lutheran Book of Worship)

## **The Meyer Minute for April 11, 2002**

Keyword: Language Games

President Bush has been calling for Yassir Arafat to condemn terrorist acts in Arabic. Arafat has done that in English but not in Arabic, the language his followers understand.

Interesting precedent...In negotiations to end the siege of Jerusalem in 701 B.C., representatives of Jerusalem's King Hezekiah asked the Assyrian commander, "Please, speak to your servant in Aramaic, since we understand it. Don't speak to us in Hebrew in the hearing of the people on the wall." They didn't want their fellow citizens to understand what was going on. No deal. The Assyrian commander spoke out loudly in Hebrew, threatening the citizens of Jerusalem with words they could understand. (Isaiah 36:11,13)

In the conflicts of your life, do you play language games to gain an advantage? Jesus says, "Let your 'Yes' be 'Yes' and your 'No', 'No.' Anything beyond this comes from the evil one." (Matthew 5:37)

## **The Meyer Minute for April 12, 2002**

Keyword: Fresh Air

Sandra Aldrich writes in "Will I Ever Be Whole Again?" about her children's first experience with a visitation at the funeral home. Young Jay and Holly's grandma had died.

"Is she breathing?' Holly whispered.

"Well, Holly...I stalled, searching for something both simple and theologically sound.

"Jay then turned from his study of the casket handles to face his little sister. 'No, Holly, she's not breathing. Remember? The breathin' part's in heaven!"

Your soul, your "breathin' part," isn't in heaven yet. It's here and now, Friday, facing the final push of the week. So take the weekend to breathe deeply the fresh air of Easter. Because the tomb is still empty, the Spirit of life can inspire you with the faith, hope and love that are in Christ Jesus. We'll need that for the days ahead!

Jesus, keep inspiring my "breathin' part" with the fresh air of Easter morning. Amen.

## **The Meyer Minute for April 15, 2002**

Keyword: Taxes

Today I feel ownership in America. That aircraft carrier...I own part of it. That flight of the space shuttle...I paid for some of it. That famous bolt or toilet seat that costs \$500 because of lousy Pentagon accounting...Yeah, I'm paying for that too...and I hate it.

Here's an odd thing. The Bible talks about taxes: "Give everyone what you owe him; If you owe taxes, pay taxes." Then, in almost the same breath, it says, "Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellow man has fulfilled the law." (Romans 13:6,8)

Love and taxes? Yes, because real love means doing good to others since God's been good to you. It's a love-hate relationship. While taxes are an unpleasant burden, remember today that you're doing good for others.

God, guide the spending of our taxes for the common good. Amen.

## **The Meyer Minute for April 16, 2002**

Yesterday I had to privilege of offering this prayer at a luncheon featuring Vice President Cheney.

O God, You revealed Yourself to Moses as "I am Who I am". (Exodus 3:14)

"The eyes of all look to You and You give them their food at the proper time. You open Your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing." (Psalm 145:15-16) To You our Creator and Sustainer we give thanks for the bounty so evident in our nation this day and at this gathering.

Your Son Jesus Christ says, "I am the way, the truth and the life." (John 14:6) May all who follow Him as Savior find in His resurrection the confidence that our service to family, community, and nations is never in vain.

For those who hold to other faiths, I pray that we all will be united in selfless, not self-seeking, service to others, filled with the holy awe that comes from the truth that "we live and move and have our being" in You, the great "I am". (Acts 17:28) Amen.

## **The Meyer Minute for April 17, 2002**

Keyword: Judgment

I read last week in "The Oregonian" newspaper that an asteroid is heading for a collision with earth in 878 years.

With hurtling toward you, is the argument with your spouse of the cosmic proportions you're making it out to be? Is that thing you're worrying about all that significant?

Then again, 878 years is a long way off. Hey, we'll all be dead!

That's right. By the time the asteroid gets here, you'll have come before Almighty God in judgment. "You shall be holy, for I the Lord you God am holy." (Leviticus 19:2) "The soul that sins shall die." (Ezekiel 18:4) The way the bible tells it, God is a lot more threatening than an asteroid.

So what's cosmically important? As Paul told a terrified listener, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved." (Acts 16:31)

So don't sweat the small stuff. Believe...and live this day in peace.

## **The Meyer Minute for April 18, 2002**

Keyword: Hope

Today is the 60th anniversary of a great exercise in hope. On April 18, 1942, Lt. Col. Jimmy Doolittle led the first bombing raid on Tokyo in World War II. 16 B-25 bombers, normally land-based planes, took off from the aircraft carrier U.S.S. Hornet. That mission was incredibly difficult, but it was an exercise in hope. Coming 5 months after Pearl Harbor, it sent America great encouragement to work for eventual victory.

Make hope a verb in your life. Let hope be something lively, something that is fueled with the conviction that the Christ who conquered death can certainly bring us through present problems to a heavenly victory. Exercise hope for peace in the world. Say a prayer, a hopeful prayer, for the Middle East. Exercise hope for problems in your life. Christ isn't going to let you down now. So go at today, exercising your hope that the resurrected Lord is leading you to an ultimate heavenly victory.

## **The Meyer Minute for April 19, 2002**

James K. Martin. He was 34 years old, quiet, but friendly with his co-workers.

Peggy Louis Holland. Peggy was a 3rd and 4th grade Sunday School teacher. She also taught Vacation Bible School and led the children's choir. She was 37.

David Jack Walker. His wife said he "was a wonderful father," loving his three daughters than any father could. He was 54.

There are more names: Francis Williams, Mark Bolte, Baylee Almon, Teresa Alexander, and so many more.

The first news bulletin April 19, 1995 from Associated Press said this: "Oklahoma City. A car bomb ripped a nine-story hole in a downtown federal office building Wednesday, killing at least 19 people, including 17 children at a day-care center, and injuring hundreds. Other victims were trapped in the rubble. The death toll was certain to go higher."

It did go higher, 168 people. Let us never forget the evil of that day and our present duty to pursue righteousness.

## **The Meyer Minute for April 22, 2002**

Keyword: Scripture Alone

Globalization? Those Washington D.C. weekend protesters against the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank hate it. Free-market capitalism, they claim, widens the gap between rich and poor. We Americans are especially guilty because we consume a disproportionate amount of the world's resources. It comes down to this: By your consuming, you're keeping someone else in abject poverty.

Not true, according to William McGurn in the April issue of "First Things." Globalization, McGurn shows, actually works against poverty. It makes a bigger slice of the "economic pie" available to all classes. You might be a wasteful consumer, a bad steward of God's gifts, but your participation in capitalism isn't the cause of world poverty.

Religious leaders, McGurn shows, take advantage of their moral authority and ignore statistics to make us feel guilty, falsely, that capitalism deepens poverty. Bottom line for me? Instead of pontificating from questionable economics, clergy should stick to clear teachings of the Bible.

## **The Meyer Minute for April 23, 2002**

Keyword: Clouds

Is the sun shining in your life? That's the way we talk, describing a good mood and a happy soul as the sun shining. Clouds, on the other hand, suggest a gloomy, overcast soul.

God came to the Israelites at Mount Sinai...in a cloud. Exodus 19 tells us that they were frightened, understandably, but think about it. God appeared to His people where they were, at that mountain. He didn't show up someplace where they weren't, say at Pikes Peak. And since no sinner can see God's glory and live (Exodus 33:20), God came to them veiled in a cloud. He wanted to be close but didn't want to hurt the people He loved. Important biblical stories, like the Transfiguration, the Crucifixion, the Ascension, and Judgment Day include clouds.

So if your soul is overcast today, or any day, recall this Bible truth: It's on the cloudy days that God comes closest to the people He loves.

## **The Meyer Minute for April 24, 2002**

Let's compare the pedophilia scandal of the Roman Catholic Church to Arthur Andersen-Enron debacle.

In Andersen-Enron there was wrong-doing and cover-up. The crimes came to light and now investigators, prosecutors and Congress are bearing down.

The pedophilia scandal is taking a somewhat similar course. Wrong-doing. Cover-up. Investigation. Prosecution.

But there are differences and they show that the church is a different creature than a business company.

Integral to the very being of a church...whether that's the Roman Catholic Church or any Christian denomination...integral to the very being of any church that carries the name of Jesus Christ should be...should be...His word of forgiveness for sin. That doesn't excuse the wrong, the prosecutable wrong, but it does provide a framework for the faithful to continue their institutional life as God's people. And the faithful will keep going.

Andersen and Enron may well die. The sincere gathering of sinners around God's word of forgiveness will end up purified and stronger than ever...and will last to eternity.

## **The Meyer Minute for April 25, 2002**

Keyword: Forgiveness

What does God's forgiveness mean for sexual abusers?

Years ago I spoke at a prayer breakfast for guards at the military prison in Leavenworth, Kansas. My topic was forgiveness, the heart of the Christian message and something we all need. If you don't think you need it, ask your wife...or your husband...or a co-worker. "There is no one so righteous on earth that he always does what is good and never sins." (Ecclesiastes 7:20)

So I'm speaking to the prison guards and I sense I'm not getting through to them. Their faces tell me they're not with me.

Later my friend, a military chaplain, explained it to me. The guards thought I meant "forgive the prisoners and turn them loose." Oh, no! That's not what I meant!

Forgiveness does not mean condoning wrong.

Forgiveness does not mean letting the wrong happen again.

Forgiveness does not mean turning the criminal loose.

Forgiveness does mean that God for Jesus' sake forgives every sincerely repentant sinner...but earthly justice may well keep that forgiven sinner in jail for a long, long time.

## **The Meyer Minute for April 26, 2002**

Keyword: Elephant

In many congregations this Sunday the Gospel will be read from John 14. In it Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6)

Arrogant! react many people who believe all religions lead to God. They often bring up the parable of the blind men and the elephant.

One blind man feels the tail and imagines the elephant is thin and flexible. Another blind man feels a leg and decides the elephant is like a tree. So it goes. Their point: No one has the whole picture of God.

But Tim Keller, a Presbyterian minister, writes this: "The only way this parable makes any sense, however, is if you've seen a whole elephant. Therefore, the minute you say, 'All religions only see part of the truth,' you are claiming the very knowledge you say no one else has. And you are demonstrating the same spiritual arrogance you accuse Christians of." ("Leadership," Winter 2002, p. 35)

"I am the way..."

## **The Meyer Minute for April 29, 2002**

Keyword: Rest!

This is an intervention! For your own good, check into the clinic. You're addicted to speed.

Got your attention? I'm not talking about drugs. I am talking about how most of us are hooked on the ever-accelerating pace of life.

Today's an anniversary in our deepening addiction to speed. On this date in 1913 an inventor in Hoboken, New Jersey, patented the zipper. Before the zipper, you buttoned or tied your clothes. That was slow. Then came Gideon Sundback with his "separable fastener," as he called it. Now we've got Velcro, faster still.

I'm not suggesting you check into an Amish community, but for your own good get your addiction to speed under control. Check yourself into the clinic of quiet time with God, Bible, and prayer. Check in every day, even several times a day.

"In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength." (Isaiah 30:15)

Speed kills. Rest with God recreates.

## **The Meyer Minute for April 30, 2002**

In Genesis 12:3 God said to Abraham, "I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse."

About that verse, the Scofield Study Bible says, "It has invariably fared ill with the people who have persecuted the Jew--well with those who have protected him." There are some American Christians who say that biblical promises to ancient Israel are promises to modern day Israel. If that's true, there's a biblical mandate for American foreign policy to be pro-Israeli.

But read Galatians 3:8-9. "The Scriptures foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: 'All nations will be blessed through you.' So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham." That tells me that the biblical promises to Israel apply to Christ and His believers, not to the modern state of Israel.

Conclusion! When the Bible mentions Israel, don't assume it's talking about today's Israeli state. It's not.