

2021 Lenten Devotions



**By and For
the People of the
First United Methodist Church
Reynoldsville, PA**

ASH WEDNESDAY
Theme: Repent/Change Direction

Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming, it is near—a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness! Like blackness spread upon the mountains a great and powerful army comes; their like has never been from of old, nor will be again after them in ages to come.

Yet even now, says the LORD, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the LORD, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing. Who knows whether he will not turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind him, a grain offering and a drink offering for the LORD, your God? Blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly; gather the people. Sanctify the congregation; assemble the aged; gather the children, even infants at the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her canopy. Between the vestibule and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep. Let them say, “Spare your people, O LORD, and do not make your heritage a mockery, a byword among the nations. Why should it be said among the peoples, ‘Where is their God?’” – Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

FIRST THURSDAY IN LENT
Theme: Repent/Change Direction

In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” — Matthew 3:1-2

The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary defines repentance in its fullest sense as "a complete change of orientation involving a judgment upon the past and a deliberate redirection for the future."

When I was a child, we were taught to give something up for Lent. It was usually a favorite food or drink that was considered a treat. This was meant to be symbolic of the repentance that was preached by John the Baptist in preparation for the coming of the Christ. As an adult, I came to realize that true repentance is a permanent change, not temporary. In that spirit, I now try to make a permanent change for the better, in a spiritual manner, for Lent. It can be something physical, such as more exercise or less binging on “bad” foods, or it can be spiritual, such as focusing more on prayer or

meditation. I don’t always succeed in making it a permanent change (I am human, after all), but I do try.

Lord, help me to focus more on you, and less on worldly things. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Submitted by Leah Carr

FIRST FRIDAY IN LENT
Theme: Repent/Change Direction

Most people "give up" something during Lent but we've all spent the last year "giving up" things because of the mitigation of living in a pandemic. So, I've been thinking that for this year instead of giving up something during Lent how about "giving to".

Since cashiers have had to give up seeing customers smile because of face masks why not buy some smiley face stickers or print or draw some and when you go to a store "give" the cashier a smile. If you have an elderly neighbor that's had to give up spending time with family and friends "give" them a call or write an encouraging note and mail it to them. Give to a charity and there are numerous other ways we could "give to" during Lent this year.

Submitted by Tina Siple

FIRST SATURDAY IN LENT
Theme: Repent/Change Direction

Genesis 9: 8-17

Early in the existence of planet Earth, God made a covenant with humans and all living things. Following the great flood, He promised that He would never again destroy all flesh by sending a world-wide flood.

Living in this area, along the Sandy Lick, we have all experienced minor flooding. When all of your possessions and your home are being destroyed, it hardly seems minor. I cannot imagine the terror that must have been felt by citizens of Johnstown during the great flood of 1889. Some of my husband’s relatives lost their lives in the flood.

However, God sent a beautiful reminder of His promise by painting a glorious rainbow of many colors in the sky. God never goes back on His promises. With this hope, each of these events were followed by rebuilding. Noah's family started anew and repopulated the earth, Johnstown rebuilt knowing that the earthen dam was gone and no longer posed a threat. Reynoldsville citizens cleaned up the mess and again enjoyed living by the water.

God gave us an even greater promise. He sent His son Jesus to save us from ourselves. When we repent of our sins and believe, God promises that we will receive everlasting life, paid for by the torture and death of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Yours in Christ,

Donna Price

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT
Theme: Repent/Change Direction

Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, "As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth."

God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth." God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth." — Genesis 9:8-17

To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.

O my God, in you I trust; do not let me be put to shame; do not let my enemies exult over me.

Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame; let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.

Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths.

Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long.

Be mindful of your mercy, O Lord, and of your steadfast love, for they have been from of old.

Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for your goodness' sake, O Lord!

Good and upright is the Lord; therefore he instructs sinners in the way.

He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way.

All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his decrees. — Psalm 25:1-10

For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water.

And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him. — I Peter 3:18-22

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news." — Mark 1:9-15

FIRST MONDAY IN LENT

Theme: Covenant/Promise

Romans 4:13-25

A promise. Each day we make promises to ourselves and others, whether they are small or large. We try to find a way to keep our promises, even when it seems impossible. This is also the challenge we face in our faith each day. There is so much that makes us question why, when really we need to focus on how we respond to it. Nearly fourteen years ago I was asked to make a promise, one that was, and still is, very significant to me and in my life. My mom asked me to promise her that I would be happy. In that moment I didn't know if I could make that promise but I told her I would try. Over these fourteen year I have learned that one way I keep that promise is to have an open line of prayer and conversation with God. To remember that his son gave his life in order for us to have a fresh day. When I think about this, a song comes to mind every time. In my head I hear a perfect tenor singing, "Because I know he holds the future. And life is worth the living, just because he lives." Remember that because he lives, we can face each day with a new found hope. No matter what this world brings, we know that his love will always lead us to light. So make that promise to him that I made to my mom. We will find happiness in each day and praise him.

Submitted by Kristen Benson

FIRST TUESDAY IN LENT

Theme: Covenant/Promise

Romans 4:13-25

As an older teenager during Lent, I tried to ramp up my Bible study, daily devotions and prayer time. This was and is my reflection period of the day to attain my God and me time.

Submitted by Kathy Crooks

SECOND WEDNESDAY IN LENT

Theme: Covenant/Promise

Romans 4:13-25, Mark 8:31-38

When I was a student at Edinboro University of Pennsylvania, the US was at war. This war, unlike others in the nation's history, was declared against an idea instead of a specific set of actors (usually other countries). How can leaders make decisions to combat something that is intangible? Studying Political Science with a dual focus on American Government and Politics and International Politics, I had many classes that examined different styles of government and how those styles impacted the decision making of its leaders. One of my favorite courses was a seminar on the morality of war.

A major reason the material covered during this course has stayed with me is that as students of a publicly-funded university in a liberal arts program, we asked – and answered – and then questioned again some of the same things Christ says in Mark 8:36-38. All decisions in international politics, particularly those regarding "war," undergo a moral dilemma. Is it moral, is it right, is it just; and if it is any of those, does that mean it is all of them? These decisions are often complex, not right or wrong, not just or unjust, not moral or immoral. Instead, they are each of those and often at the same time. However, in the world, where war is present, these moral dilemmas are necessary.

Paul reminds us in his letter to the Romans (4:13-25) that laws and governments are not what will bring forth the promises of God. It is only through faith and by the grace of God that His promises will become real for us. "The words 'it was credited to him' were written not for [Abraham] alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness – for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification" (Romans 4:23-25, NIV). When faced with our own moral dilemmas in life, we must remember to have faith that God will guide us into the decisions that make His will be done, not ours.

Submitted by Sheri Price

SECOND THURSDAY IN LENT

Theme: Covenant/Promise

What is a covenant? A covenant is a promise. We live with all sorts of covenants/promises we have made every day. We have a covenant with the providers of electricity, natural gas, and water: they have promised to provide these things to our homes and we have promised to pay for what we use. We have a covenant with the bank which provided us with the money to buy a car: it is our promise that we will pay the money back, with interest, in a regular and timely manner. We have a covenant with our spouse: we have promised to love, honor, and cherish our spouse “til death us do part,” not just when we “feel like it.” But the most amazing covenant is not one which we have made, but the one God has made: God has promised to love us with a love which shall never let us go! And this covenant/promise is fulfilled in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

SECOND FRIDAY IN LENT

Theme: Covenant/Promise

We entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

As we work together with him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. For he says, “At an acceptable time I have listened to you, and on a day of salvation I have helped you.” See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation! We are putting no obstacle in anyone’s way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see—we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything. – 2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10

SECOND SATURDAY IN LENT

Theme: Covenant/Promise

“Gifts”

Christmas 2020 and I received a pony from my brother. He had called in November to tell me that he had bought my Christmas gift and said that I would love it, since it was something that I had always wanted. He said it was a pony and I played along and said what a wonderful gift. I shared this news with my other siblings and daughter and we talked about the pony every day. I named it “Book” and Wendy said she was buying me a bridle for Christmas.

Another call from my brother saying he had picked up the pony and he was keeping it in the garage. He said he had to go out and get more oats and hay, as he was surprised at how much it ate. Judd again called in early December to say he had a visit from the sheriff the day before and received a fine of \$75 for having livestock in the city of Erie. He had 3 days to get the pony out of the garage and would be fined again if he didn’t comply. He was going to bring the pony down, but called Jackie, the Reynoldsville borough secretary, and she said absolutely not. There is an ordinance against having ponies in the borough. Judd decided he was going to have to return it to the owner. He said the owner would only return ½ his money, he was out \$75 for the fine and now had no Christmas gift for me.

Judd shared all this with my sister, Lisa and she said you are in trouble, because Susan was really looking forward to that pony and she’s going to be disappointed. He also shared with my Reynoldsville sister, Sharon and she had a suggestion. He called Lisa back and asked if she would get on the net to see if she could find me a special pony. She found one and when she told my brother the price, he said no way am I paying that much.

Christmas morning my brother called and said how do you like your pony? I said well obviously I didn’t get one. He said you had better check your lower back porch, as Book is waiting for you. I checked and, wonder of wonders, there was my pony. It seems he had been delivered at midnight and spent the night in the cold.

You may wonder what my little story has to do with Lent, since Lent is a time for spiritual growth. Always in the past I felt I had to give something up to show my love for God. This year I want to remember one gift from

God every day of Lent that shows His continual love for me. He makes living on this earth tolerable because of love, hope, family, joy, kindness, fun, sharing, and all his other marvelous gifts. He gives His all to us constantly and I want to glorify Him in this Lenten season by thanking him for the wonderful gift of memories that fill my heart, because He gave His life for me.

Book, my stick pony, brought a season of joy.

Submitted by Susan Moore

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

Theme: Covenant/Promise

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous.” Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him,

“As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you.

I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.

God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.” — Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16

You who fear the Lord, praise him! All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him; stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel!

For he did not despise or abhor the affliction of the afflicted; he did not hide his face from me, but heard when I cried to him.

From you comes my praise in the great congregation; my vows I will pay before those who fear him.

The poor shall eat and be satisfied; those who seek him shall praise the Lord. May your hearts live forever!

All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord; and all the families of the nations shall worship before him.

For dominion belongs to the Lord, and he rules over the nations.

To him, indeed, shall all who sleep in the earth bow down; before him shall bow all who go down to the dust, and I shall live for him.

Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord,

and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn, saying that he has done it. — Psalm 22:23-31

For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation. For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”) —in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. Hoping against hope, he believed that he would become “the father of many nations,” according to what was said, “So numerous shall your descendants be.” He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was already as good as dead (for he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah’s womb. No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. Therefore his faith “was reckoned to him as righteousness.”

Now the words, “it was reckoned to him,” were written not for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification. — Romans 4:13-25

Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”

He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.” — Mark 8:31-38

THIRD MONDAY IN LENT

Theme: Hear/Listen

Obedience is always about listening. It is about having heard a command or word of instruction, but also about making the decision truly *to listen* to that command or instruction. And having heard and decided to listen, obedience is about yielding our will to that of another, be that other one our parent, spouse, boss, or friend. Lent is our time to hear again the story of Jesus’ passion, but more than this, to listen so intently to that story that our behavior is transformed into obedience, and our obedience into love.

THIRD TUESDAY IN LENT

Theme: Hear/Listen

Be still and know that I am God. – Psalm 46:10

This scripture is very dear to me. I’m not a patient person. So, when I start to try doing things my way and get thrown a curve, I know that’s God saying, “You’re doing it again!” And this verse pops into my head.

More and more, I’m learning to be still and let God have the wheel.

Submitted by Shelly and Mikayla Wells

THIRD WEDNESDAY IN LENT

Theme: Hear/Listen

At the third new moon after the Israelites had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that very day, they came into the wilderness of Sinai. They had journeyed from Rephidim, entered the wilderness of Sinai, and camped in the wilderness; Israel camped there in front of the mountain. Then Moses went up to God; the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, ‘Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the Israelites: You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples. Indeed, the whole earth is mine, but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the Israelites.’ – Exodus 19.1-6

THIRD THURSDAY IN LENT

Theme: Hear/Listen

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. – Psalm 19:1

God can speak to us in any way He chooses to do so. As people, we communicate through words, but God’s messages for me come in different ways. He speaks to my heart, or He places certain things where I can’t miss them to remind me of someone or something that He’s blessed me with, whether that be a cardinal at the bird feeder or a penny on the sidewalk.

When our focus is on God and the messages that He wants us to hear, it doesn’t just speak to us. It changes our mindset, and the result of that is the things that we say and do align with Him too.

Psalm 19:4 – May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.

Submitted by Marie Getch

THIRD FRIDAY IN LENT

Theme: Hear/Listen

Now this is the commandment—the statutes and the ordinances—that the LORD your God charged me to teach you to observe in the land that you are about to cross into and occupy, so that you and your children and your children’s children may fear the LORD your God all the days of your life, and keep all his decrees and his commandments that I am commanding you, so that your days may be long. Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe them diligently, so that it may go well with you, and so that you may multiply greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, as the LORD, the God of your ancestors, has promised you.

Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. – Deuteronomy 6.1-9

THIRD SATURDAY IN LENT

Theme: Hear/Listen

In our English language, we often use the words “hear” and “listen” interchangeably, but there is a difference:

- “Hearing” is the ability to receive sounds
- “Listening” is something that you choose to do. It doesn't just happen.

As a patient at Presbyterian University Hospital's Trauma ICU, in an induced coma, and on a ventilator for a month, I had no idea of my surroundings. But, I heard sounds not knowing what they were. After several months of being home, I had “glimpses” of happenings that had occurred. There was a blanket being pulled up to my neck with a kiss on the cheek followed by the words, “I love you, and I'm to go and pray for you”. These words began to

take form and the nursing staff told me that this man was my husband. As I gradually began to wake up, I anticipated his “tucking” me in at night before he left. I listened for those words, and anticipated them.

With God, it is quite different. We need to constantly remind ourselves that we are hearing Him through Jesus' teaching as written (and it is accounted for) in the Bible, and the way He wants us to live our lives when we cannot physically hear Him. Are we challenging ourselves and living our lives through His teaching as we read His word and listen for his quiet direction?

Dear Lord, Let us hear you and listen, and place Your words into action, allowing the Holy Spirit to give power to our words, and use them to bring glory to You. Amen.

I had one other thought:

So what is the practical application of hearing vs listening today?

As small children in school, we learned to recite the Pledge of Allegiance, It was imbedded in our minds: we stood at attention, put our right hand over our heart, faced the flag, and recited the Pledge. Around Memorial Day, and the 4th of July, on the radio we hear Red Skelton doing a narrative defining almost every word of the Pledge, and we listen.

Submitted by Louise Christofor

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

Theme: Hear/Listen

Then God spoke all these words: I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject

me, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments. You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not acquit anyone who misuses his name. Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it.

Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor. — Exodus 20:1-17

The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.

Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge.

There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard;

yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In the heavens he has set a tent for the sun,

which comes out like a bridegroom from his wedding canopy, and like a strong man runs its course with joy.

Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them; and nothing is hid from its heat.

The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the decrees of the Lord are sure, making wise the simple;

the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is clear, enlightening the eyes;

the fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever; the ordinances of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.

More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and drippings of the honeycomb.

Moreover by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

But who can detect their errors? Clear me from hidden faults.

Keep back your servant also from the insolent; do not let them have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression.

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer. — Psalm 19

For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart." Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength. — 1 Corinthians 1:18-25

The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me." The Jews then said to him,

“What sign can you show us for doing this?” Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” The Jews then said, “This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?” But he was speaking of the temple of his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken. — John 2:13-22

THIRD MONDAY IN LENT

Theme: Lifted Up

“Ghosts”

How many of us have told our children or child there are no such things as ghosts??? Welcome to my world and my confusing walk in faith as a young child into my late teenage years.

I was raised a Presbyterian and attended Sunday School and church regularly. We worship, sang, and prayed, learning of the Holy Trinity, consisting of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.

Ghosts??? Repeatedly through my young years I was told and scolded that “there are no such things as ghosts!!!” However, every week, every Sunday for one hour in God’s house, a “real,” “special” Holy Ghost was mentioned.

The only ghost I knew of was on TV: Casper the Friendly Ghost. In my mind and at my comfort level, I thought of Casper as being like Jesus. Casper’s brothers were “bad ghosts,” like the Devil....But we know they are all make believe...!!!

On occasion throughout my walk in faith, I would question clergy, important Christian adults, or Sunday School teachers at church, searching for answers about “the missing, confusing, puzzle piece” of the Holy Trinity. I was told it’s just something, some day when I got older, I would learn and understand. “Don’t sweat it.” “sometimes God things just take time.” So, silently, I stayed frustrated and tormented at church and church functions (and this was ironically the opposite of the many comfort and joy hymns we sang).

During one particular Holy Week (I was in my late teens then), my girlfriend and her father, a Baptist minister, invited me to an evening Sunday School movie about the crucifixion and ascension of Jesus Christ.

It was that very evening my long pleading prayers were answered, and the puzzle piece revealed, when I realized that “the risen ghost of Jesus Christ appeared to his disciples and me too!!!”

In summary, there is one Holy Ghost/Holy Spirit, who is one with God the Father and God the Son.

THIRD TUESDAY IN LENT

Theme: Lifted Up

Ephesians 2.1-10

In Ephesians 2 Paul reminds us that we all have followed the ways of the world, satisfying our everyday cravings and doing whatever we wanted to do. But because of God’s great love and mercy for us, we have been saved from the life of doing for ourselves and living in sin, to a life living with Christ. Nice! It is not because of anything that we do, but because He loves us that we have been saved from ourselves. However, verse 10 gives us our instructions. “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

So.... while good works do not save us, once we are saved then we have good works to do!! Works prepared in advance. All we have to do is figure out what they are and then get to work! With His help and guidance of course. So, as we pray let us remember to ask what’s on the agenda for tomorrow and what it is we are to do. We might be surprised by the answers.

Submitted by Barb Holcombe

FOURTH WEDNESDAY IN LENT

Theme: Lifted Up

A Song of Ascents. Of David.

*O LORD, my heart is not lifted up,
my eyes are not raised too high;
I do not occupy myself with things
too great and too marvellous for me.
But I have calmed and quieted my soul,
like a weaned child with its mother;
my soul is like the weaned child that is with me.*

*O Israel, hope in the LORD
from this time on and for evermore. – Psalm 133*

FOURTH THURSDAY IN LENT
Theme: Lifted Up

*To everything there is a season,
A time for every purpose under heaven:
A time to be born, And a time to die;
A time to plant, And a time to pluck what is planted;
A time to kill, And a time to heal;
A time to break down, And a time to build up;
A time to weep, And a time to laugh;
A time to mourn, And a time to dance;
A time to cast away stones, And a time to gather stones;
A time to embrace, And a time to refrain from embracing;
A time to gain, And a time to lose;
A time to keep, And a time to throw away;
A time to tear, And a time to sew;
A time to keep silence, And a time to speak;
A time to love, And a time to hate;
A time of war, And a time of peace.
– Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 (NKJV)*

As I reflect over the past year, the words of this passage speak loudly to me. I have felt many of these emotions over the last year since my dad passed away and going through the pandemic. This passage also rings true of the Easter story. I have always felt conflicting emotions during lent. So many things happened leading up to the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. So many emotions ranging from anger and sadness to joy and healing. The overarching message is that God can handle all of our moods and emotions and it is okay to feel them. He gave his son Jesus to wipe away our sins and he has already forgiven anything that we can do or feel. We just have to ask and believe in him. As we move forward through this year and this Lenten season a few words stand out to me from this passage. Words that I want to define how I move through life. Those words are Laugh, Dance and Peace. There will be peaks and valleys through our life's journey but

may we all find the laughter, dance when we get the chance and ultimately live God's Peace!

Submitted by Anna Price

FOURTH FRIDAY IN LENT
Theme: Lifted Up

*And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.'
He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die. – John 12:32-33*

FOURTH SATURDAY IN LENT
Theme: Lifted Up

“Most of the greatest gifts and deepest joys that God gives us come wrapped in painful packages.”

You whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called from its farthest regions, and said to you, “You are my servant, I have chosen you and not cast you away.” Fear not for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand. – Isaiah 41:9-10

If we have faith and sincerely trust God, we will not be concerned as to whether the answer is “wait” or the answer is “no” or “yes.” We must just trust, and wait and see if God in His timing will see fit to answer as we have requested, or perhaps He has something better in mind for us. Remember your prayer should end with “Not my will, Lord, but Your will.” (Luke 22:42).

“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.” – Proverbs 3:5, 6

Submitted by Carol Wells

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT
Theme: Lifted Up

From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; but the people became impatient on the way. The people spoke against God and against Moses, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we

detest this miserable food.” Then the Lord sent poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. The people came to Moses and said, “We have sinned by speaking against the Lord and against you; pray to the Lord to take away the serpents from us.” So Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said to Moses, “Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live.” So Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole; and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live. — Numbers 21:4-9

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever.

Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, those he redeemed from trouble

and gathered in from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.

Some were sick through their sinful ways, and because of their iniquities endured affliction;

they loathed any kind of food, and they drew near to the gates of death.

Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress;

he sent out his word and healed them, and delivered them from destruction.

Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wonderful works to humankind.

And let them offer thanksgiving sacrifices, and tell of his deeds with songs of joy. — Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22

You were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient. All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else.

But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life. — Ephesians 2:1-10

And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. “Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.” — John 3:14-21

FOURTH MONDAY IN LENT

Theme: Forgiveness

We talk a lot about forgiveness in the church. This should be no surprise since the very foundation of our faith is the forgiveness and grace we know from God through the Incarnation and Offering of Jesus. I suspect we also recognize that we are not nearly so good at forgiving as is God. After all, we may say “I forgive you,” but how often do we hold on to the memory of the sin? How often are we suspicious of the one who has sinned, expecting that they will do the same thing again? Perhaps it is because we are so keenly aware of the nature of being human that we recognize how difficult it is for a person to change their behaviors. Perhaps we simply are trying to protect ourselves from being offended, from being hurt, again. Whatever the reason or reasons may be, both the offender and the offended become stuck in the quagmire of sin and brokenness.

The problem with all this is that as long as we remember, we are still holding on to the sin of the other, and this holding on affects both the one who sinned and the one who was “sinned against.” The “sinner” cannot experience a completely redemptive transformation because they still experience the suspicions and reminders of the other, as well as their own inability to forgive themselves. The one “sinned against” cannot experience a completely redemptive transformation either because their “holding on” is really rooted in a kind of fear of what may happen again, and this fear holds them captive to the sin as well.

If you ever catch yourself saying (or even thinking), “Well, I’ll forgive, but I will won’t forget,” then you have not offered nor accepted the redemptive power of forgiveness, for true forgiveness encompasses forgetting as well. God himself has set the example:

*I, I am He
who blots out your transgressions for my own sake,
and I will not remember your sins. – Isaiah 43:25*

FOURTH TUESDAY IN LENT

Theme: Forgiveness

Forgiveness is probably one of the hardest things for anyone to do. We are commanded by God to forgive or we will not be forgiven by God. Many of us do not take this seriously enough, but it is one of the things that will separate us from God. In one of my pamphlets, “Remember, our Father is full of mercy. He is always ready to forgive, always ready to restore me.”

There are many times we have heard about or seen on TV where people forgive openly someone who has done something terrible to them or a family member. One case that comes to mind is on an episode of a court show. A young man was convicted of killing a woman’s son. When the mother was asked if she wanted to say anything to the man, first she turned to the man’s mother and hugged her. They both embraced each other and cried. Then she turned to the young man and went to him and hugged him. They both embraced and cried. She told him she forgave him and he earnestly told her how sorry he was for what he had done. You could tell that he seriously felt remorse.

There are many cases like this and I hope that they also pray to God for forgiveness so they will be with God in glory someday. I hope and pray that

we can all be capable of easily forgiving and not having to force ourselves to do so. If we have to force ourselves, then it is probably not sincere.

Prayer: Please, Heavenly Father, help me to be able to easily and earnestly forgive. Amen!

Submitted by Naomi Bailey

FIFTH WEDNESDAY IN LENT

Theme: Forgiveness

*This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel
after those days, says the Lord:
I will put my laws in their minds,
and write them on their hearts,
and I will be their God,
and they shall be my people.
And they shall not teach one another
or say to each other, “Know the Lord”,
for they shall all know me,
from the least of them to the greatest.
For I will be merciful towards their iniquities,
and I will remember their sins no more.’ – Hebrews 8.10-12*

FIFTH THURSDAY IN LENT

Theme: Forgiveness

“Forgiveness and the Abusive Shouter”

There are many places in the Bible that deal with forgiveness.

Psalm 130:4 Forgiveness is God’s habit. Mark 11:25 If you have anything against someone, forgive him so God can forgive you. And my favorite is Matthew 18:21-22 Don’t just forgive 7 times, but 70 X 7. (paraphrased)

Sometimes it is difficult to forgive. One day Phil and I were walking along a city street where merchants were having sidewalk sales. The attractive displays were neatly arranged until the lady right in front of us tripped and bumped into one of the displays which broke a small glass figurine. Thinking the lady was with us, the clerk began shouting at us.

“YOU IDIOTS! WATCH WHERE YOU’RE GOING. LOOK WHAT YOU’VE DONE TO THE DISPLAY! HOW STUPID CAN YOU BE! His rant didn’t stop there.

It was very difficult for me not to chime in as loudly as he. Instead, I asked the woman if she was ok. Fortunately, she was.

Phil looked at me as the man was continuing his LOUD ABUSE. Phil simply wanted to leave, but I wanted to set that individual straight. Fortunately, Phil reminded me of the 70 X 7 forgiveness scripture. I took a big breath and we left, leaving the shouting man to himself. It was wrong to inflame the situation further. It actually amounted to nothing. So, I asked God to help me to forgive. And help that individual to be able to relax. Thank you God.

Submitted by Gayle Borden and Phillip Reiter

FIFTH FRIDAY IN LENT

Theme: Forgiveness

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace that he lavished on us. — Ephesians 1.3-8a*

FIFTH SATURDAY IN LENT

Theme: Forgiveness

There’s a story about a nun who sought an audience with the Pope because she had a vision of the Lord. When she told him of her vision, the Pope wanted to be certain that it was in fact a vision of the Lord and not just a figment of her imagination, so the Pope gave her a question for which only the Lord himself would know the answer. Weeks later, the nun returned to the Pope, assuring him that she had once again had a vision of the Lord. The Pope asked her, “Did you remember to ask the Lord my question?” “Yes,

your Holiness,” she responded. “And what did the Lord say?, again inquired the Pope.” The nun answered, “He said he didn’t remember.”

FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

Theme: Forgiveness

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, “Know the Lord,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more. — Jeremiah 31:31-34

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.

Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.

Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are justified in your sentence and blameless when you pass judgment.

Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me.

You desire truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.

Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.

Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me.

Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit.
— Psalm 51:1-12

So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest, but was appointed by the one who said to him, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you”; as he says also in another place, “You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek.” In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, having been designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek. — Hebrews 5:5-10

Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

“Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die. — John 12:20-33

FIFTH MONDAY IN LENT

Theme: Sacrifice/Offering

For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made by human hands, a mere copy of the true one, but he entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. Nor was it to offer himself again and again, as the high priest enters the Holy Place year after year with blood that is not his own; for then he would have had to suffer again and again since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the age to remove sin by the sacrifice of himself. — Hebrews 9:24-26

FIFTH TUESDAY IN LENT

Theme: Sacrifice/Offering

Isiah 50: 4-9 Psalm 31: 9-16 Philippians 2: 5-11

Lent to me is a combination of several things. As a young child my first strong recall of “why Lent?” was that God sacrificed his only Son for me. So, my mother had me ‘sacrifice’ something that meant a lot to me for 40 days...giving it up in God’s name to honor Him.

Submitted by Kathy Crooks

SIXTH WEDNESDAY IN LENT

Theme Sacrifice/Offering

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children,² and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. — Ephesians 5:1*

SIXTH THURSDAY IN LENT

Theme: Sacrifice/Offering

It was the third hour when they crucified him. Mark 15:25

Crucifixion. We can’t celebrate Easter without it. A sermon that has stayed with me for years I heard at one of our combined Good Friday Services years ago. The pastor described the process of crucifixion. I’ll keep this G rated and simply state it is a horrific death and one that the Romans perfected. They were good at what they did. The actual cause of death is suffocation, the person hanging on the cross can no longer push themselves up for a breath of air. If necessary, the executor breaks the legs of the accused to hasten the process. Keep in mind this is if it benefits the Romans, not to show mercy for the person hanging on the cross. I cannot imagine the pain. And Christ was willing to hang on that cross for me. For

you. And as horrific as the physical pain was, the pain of being the sacrificial lamb for my sins was worse! God the Father had to turn away from the sin. Christ was ALONE. What greater love could there be than for what Christ did for me, for you!! Halleluiah the crucifixion is not the end of the story. Christ defeated death and arose on Easter!

Submitted by Kim Taglaiferre

SIXTH FRIDAY IN LENT

Theme: Sacrifice/Offering

For God has imprisoned all in disobedience so that he may be merciful to all.

O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgements and how inscrutable his ways!

*‘For who has known the mind of the Lord?
Or who has been his counsellor?’
‘Or who has given a gift to him,
to receive a gift in return?’*

For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory for ever. Amen.

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

*For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgement, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.
– Romans 11:32-12:3*

SIXTH SATURDAY IN LENT

Theme: Sacrifice/Offering

“Now My soul has become troubled; and what am I to say? ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father,

glorify Your name.” Then a voice came out of heaven: “I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.” – John 12:27-28

Across the timeline of my life over 60+ years, there have been numerous hills and valleys. There is no question that the past twelve months have been one of the deeper valleys. The world-wide pandemic has wreaked havoc with so many aspects of my life. A long-anticipated, 40-year anniversary trip to England-Ireland-Scotland – *cancelled*. After ten consecutive years, my mission trip to Guatemala – *cancelled*. Family reunions, birthday celebrations, holiday gatherings, concerts, fairs, etc. – all *cancelled*. My employer’s business suffered like never before, triggering anxious concern for the future. And worst of all, my beautiful, sweet daughter was diagnosed with breast cancer in the midst of this, which induced an indescribable heartache. On top of all this, in-person worship services being cancelled depleted the weekly boost to sustaining grace I felt throughout my lifetime.

But, I know all that pales in comparison to the anguish Jesus felt, bowing down in the garden, beseeching His Father to spare Him from the excruciating pain of crucifixion. In John 12 we learn that Jesus alluded to His death to His disciples, and revealed that He knew this was His life’s purpose. Yet when the hour was at hand, His humanness caused Him to plead so strongly for His Father to spare Him, that in His anguish He sweat drops of blood; and later cried out, “*My Father, why have you forsaken me?!*”

If we are true children of God and hold true to our faith, then we must trust that God has a purpose for every walk through every valley, no matter how deep. Our cry needs to be “Father, through it all glorify Your name”. Then take solace and trust that His still, small voice from Heaven will say “I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.”

Submitted by Monty Kunes

PALM/PASSION SUNDAY

Theme: Sacrifice/Offering

The Palms

When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples and said to them, “Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it. If anyone says

to you, 'Why are you doing this?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately.'" They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, some of the bystanders said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it. Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting,

*"Hosanna!
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!
Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David!
Hosanna in the highest heaven!"*

Then he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple; and when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve. — Mark 11:1-11

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his steadfast love endures forever!

Let Israel say, "His steadfast love endures forever."

Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the Lord.

This is the gate of the Lord; the righteous shall enter through it.

I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation.

The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.

This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.

This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Save us, we beseech you, O Lord! O Lord, we beseech you, give us success!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. We bless you from the house of the Lord.

The Lord is God, and he has given us light. Bind the festal procession with branches, up to the horns of the altar.

You are my God, and I will give thanks to you; you are my God, I will extol you.

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever. — Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29

The Passion

The Lord God has given me the tongue of a teacher, that I may know how to sustain the weary with a word. Morning by morning he wakens— wakens my ear to listen as those who are taught. The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious, I did not turn backward. I gave my back to those who struck me, and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I did not hide my face from insult and spitting. The Lord God helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame; he who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who are my adversaries? Let them confront me. It is the Lord God who helps me; who will declare me guilty? — Isaiah 50:4-9a

Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am in distress; my eye wastes away from grief, my soul and body also.

For my life is spent with sorrow, and my years with sighing; my strength fails because of my misery, and my bones waste away.

I am the scorn of all my adversaries, a horror to my neighbors, an object of dread to my acquaintances; those who see me in the street flee from me.

I have passed out of mind like one who is dead; I have become like a broken vessel.

For I hear the whispering of many— terror all around!— as they scheme together against me, as they plot to take my life.

But I trust in you, O Lord; I say, "You are my God."

My times are in your hand; deliver me from the hand of my enemies and persecutors.

Let your face shine upon your servant; save me in your steadfast love.
— Psalm 31:9-16

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. — Philippians 2:5-11

It was two days before the Passover and the festival of Unleavened Bread. The chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him; for they said, “Not during the festival, or there may be a riot among the people.”

While he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at the table, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment of nard, and she broke open the jar and poured the ointment on his head. But some were there who said to one another in anger, “Why was the ointment wasted in this way? For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor.” And they scolded her. But Jesus said, “Let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has performed a good service for me. For you always have the poor with you, and you can show kindness to them whenever you wish; but you will not always have me. She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for its burial. Truly I tell you, wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her.”

Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them. When they heard it, they were greatly pleased, and promised to give him money. So he began to look for an opportunity to betray him.

On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb is sacrificed, his disciples said to him, “Where do you want us to go and make the

preparations for you to eat the Passover?” So he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, “Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him, and wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, ‘The Teacher asks, Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’ He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there.” So the disciples set out and went to the city, and found everything as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover meal.

When it was evening, he came with the twelve. And when they had taken their places and were eating, Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me.” They began to be distressed and to say to him one after another, “Surely, not I?” He said to them, “It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the bowl with me. For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born.”

While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, “Take; this is my body.” Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. He said to them, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.”

When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. And Jesus said to them,

*“You will all become deserters; for it is written,
‘I will strike the shepherd,
and the sheep will be scattered.’*

But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.” Peter said to him, “Even though all become deserters, I will not.” Jesus said to him, “Truly I tell you, this day, this very night, before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times.” But he said vehemently, “Even though I must die with you, I will not deny you.” And all of them said the same.

They went to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” He took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be distressed and agitated. And he said to them, “I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake.” And going a little farther, he

threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. He said, "Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want." He came and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep awake one hour? Keep awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. And once more he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to say to him. He came a third time and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Enough! The hour has come; the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand."

Immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; and with him there was a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders. Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard." So when he came, he went up to him at once and said, "Rabbi!" and kissed him. Then they laid hands on him and arrested him. But one of those who stood near drew his sword and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear. Then Jesus said to them, "Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as though I were a bandit? Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not arrest me. But let the scriptures be fulfilled." All of them deserted him and fled.

A certain young man was following him, wearing nothing but a linen cloth. They caught hold of him, but he left the linen cloth and ran off naked.

They took Jesus to the high priest; and all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes were assembled. Peter had followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest; and he was sitting with the guards, warming himself at the fire. Now the chief priests and the whole council were looking for testimony against Jesus to put him to death; but they found none. For many gave false testimony against him, and their testimony did not agree. Some stood up and gave false testimony against him, saying, "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.'" But even on this point their testimony did not agree. Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, "Have you no answer? What is it that they testify against you?" But he was silent and did not answer. Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?" Jesus said, "I am; and

'you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power,' and 'coming with the clouds of heaven.'"

Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, "Why do we still need witnesses? You have heard his blasphemy! What is your decision?" All of them condemned him as deserving death. Some began to spit on him, to blindfold him, and to strike him, saying to him, "Prophecy!" The guards also took him over and beat him.

While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant-girls of the high priest came by. When she saw Peter warming himself, she stared at him and said, "You also were with Jesus, the man from Nazareth." But he denied it, saying, "I do not know or understand what you are talking about." And he went out into the forecourt. Then the cock crowed. And the servant-girl, on seeing him, began again to say to the bystanders, "This man is one of them." But again he denied it. Then after a little while the bystanders again said to Peter, "Certainly you are one of them; for you are a Galilean." But he began to curse, and he swore an oath, "I do not know this man you are talking about." At that moment the cock crowed for the second time. Then Peter remembered that Jesus had said to him, "Before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times." And he broke down and wept.

As soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. They bound Jesus, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate. Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" He answered him, "You say so." Then the chief priests accused him of many things. Pilate asked him again, "Have you no answer? See how many charges they bring against you." But Jesus made no further reply, so that Pilate was amazed.

Now at the festival he used to release a prisoner for them, anyone for whom they asked. Now a man called Barabbas was in prison with the rebels who had committed murder during the insurrection. So the crowd came and began to ask Pilate to do for them according to his custom. Then he answered them, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" For he realized that it was out of jealousy that the chief priests had handed him over. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas for them instead. Pilate spoke to them again, "Then what do you wish me to do with the man you call the King of the Jews?" They shouted back, "Crucify him!" Pilate asked them, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify him!" So Pilate, wishing to satisfy

the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

Then the soldiers led him into the courtyard of the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters); and they called together the whole cohort. And they clothed him in a purple cloak; and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on him. And they began saluting him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" They struck his head with a reed, spat upon him, and knelt down in homage to him. After mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus. Then they brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means the place of a skull). And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh; but he did not take it. And they crucified him, and divided his clothes among them, casting lots to decide what each should take.

It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. The inscription of the charge against him read, "The King of the Jews." And with him they crucified two bandits, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself, and come down from the cross!" In the same way the chief priests, along with the scribes, were also mocking him among themselves and saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now, so that we may see and believe." Those who were crucified with him also taunted him.

When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, "Listen, he is calling for Elijah." And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down." Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was God's Son!"

There were also women looking on from a distance; among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. These used to follow him and provided for him when he was in Galilee; and there were many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem.

When evening had come, and since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate wondered if he were already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he had been dead for some time. When he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the body to Joseph. Then Joseph bought a linen cloth, and taking down the body, wrapped it in the linen cloth, and laid it in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where the body was laid. — Mark 14.1-15.47

MONDAY OF HOLY WEEK

Theme: Good News

Now I should remind you, brothers and sisters, of the good news that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received, in which also you stand, through which also you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you—unless you have come to believe in vain.

For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to someone untimely born, he appeared also to me. — 1 Corinthians 15:1-8

TUESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

Theme: Good News

He was destined before the foundation of the world, but was revealed at the end of the ages for your sake. Through him you have come to trust in God,

who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are set on God.

Now that you have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth so that you have genuine mutual love, love one another deeply from the heart. You have been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God. For

*'All flesh is like grass
and all its glory like the flower of grass.*

*The grass withers,
and the flower falls,*

but the word of the Lord endures for ever.'

That word is the good news that was announced to you.

– 1 Peter 1:20-25

WEDNESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

Theme: Good News

Mark 16: 1-8 John 20: 19-31 1 Corinthians 15: 1-11 Psalm 133

My favorite part of Lent is giving. God gave us his Son and the promise of eternal life. I find I can give through witnessing, donating, helping...anything to bring a smile or a happy moment to someone in need. We all need. Most importantly we need to be assured of the promise that by believing in what God did by sacrificing His only Son and then raising Him from the tomb, we will have that glorious eternal life in Heaven.

Do you have an iPad? Please look up the lyrics to the song "It's About the Cross". (The Ball Brothers) To me this is the meaning of Lent and Easter.

Submitted by Kathy Crooks

MAUNDY THURSDAY

Theme: Good News

For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often

as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

– 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

GOOD FRIDAY

Theme: Good News

Jeremiah 29:11-13

I have always been a worrier, mostly about things that I have no control over. Worrying is a habit that is hard for me to break and I often spend way too much of my time worrying. I'm working hard on worrying less and trusting God to be there with me to solve my worries, fears and anxiety. The last year I have worried about many things, especially the future. Many things in our world today steal our hope and cause us to doubt that a good future is ahead. We cannot let worry overwhelm us because God knows the future and promises us that the future is full of hope. Often I think to myself if I knew the future I could prepare myself and my family for it and worry less about everything. That is not what God wants for us and he is the only one who truly knows what the future holds. All that he wants us to do is trust in him and "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you." (1 Peter 5:7 (NIV)). God knows what will happen and he will be with us through it all. We need to worry less, pray more, and have faith in God. There is nothing that is out of God's control and all things are possible with God, so if you think about it there really is nothing to worry about.

Submitted by Carley Armagost

HOLY SATURDAY

Theme: Good News

John 20:19-31

In this scripture Jesus comes to the disciples after he has risen from the dead-so they might believe. Thomas was not present and until he could see for himself, he had doubts.

One of my first dulcimer teachers told me a "d" chord on a dulcimer tuned to DAA sounded the same as a "d" chord on a dulcimer with strings tuned to DAD. You can usually just tell by looking at me what I'm thinking. I was doubtful. He showed me it was true. I am sometimes a "doubting Thomas".

Belief is a good thing. When I start out on a 2 mile walk, I have to believe I'll make it home again. When I cut fabric for a sewing project, I have to believe I'll finish it. It also helps when other people believe in you. The band at the Foundry is call Hit or Miss. Sometimes what you play is a hit, sometimes it's not. The rest of the band backs you up and you can always try it again the following week. Perseverance usually pays off. Practice helps too.

God never gives up on us. He has shown me over and over that he is with me. I am a "believing Thomas" when it comes to Jesus.

Submitted by Sue Stapleton

EASTER DAY
Theme: Good News

Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. — Acts 4:32-35

How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity!

It is like the precious oil on the head, running down upon the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down over the collar of his robes.

It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion. For there the Lord ordained his blessing, life forevermore. — Psalm 133

Now I would remind you, brothers and sisters, of the good news that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received, in which also you stand, through which also you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you—unless you have come to believe in vain. For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most

of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me has not been in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them—though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. Whether then it was I or they, so we proclaim and so you have come to believe. — 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. They had been saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you." So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid. — Mark 16:1-8