



The Season of Lent

St. John's United Methodist Church

130 Tom Hall Street

Fort Mill, SC 29715

Praying.

Fasting.

Almsgiving.

Ash Wednesday - March 5, 2025

“Remember that you are dust, and to dust, you shall return.”
Genesis 3:19

On March 5th again this year, we will begin our Lenten journey toward the cross, where we reflect on repentance and spiritual renewal as we move through the season of Lent in preparation for Easter. During this service, ashes will be placed on your forehead as a sign of our mortality and a reminder of our need for God’s grace. On this day and for the next forty days, we are called to turn away from sin and embrace the path of righteousness through prayer, fasting, self-examination, repentance and self-denial.

Through a relationship with Jesus and in the community of faith, Jesus invites us to examine our hearts, not just through outward expressions. Through a relationship with Christ, he also calls us to genuine repentance and a renewed commitment to live a life in his image so that our lives reflect his. Lent is our opportunity to realign our lives with God, seeking His forgiveness, grace and mercy.

Prayer: Holy God, as we enter this season of Lent, help us to humble ourselves before you that we may acknowledge our sinful ways and to seek your grace and redemption. Create in us a clean heart and renew the right spirit within us. May you draw us closer to you through prayer, fasting and self-denial.

Suggestions to help me stay focused during the season of Lent.

1. Spend time in prayer, asking God to reveal areas of my life that need repentance.
2. Practice fasting or sacrifice something meaningful as an offering to God.
3. Perform an act of kindness or charity to reflect God’s love.

May God bless us as we journey through Lent today!

Karen Radcliffe

Thursday, March 6, 2025

What is Lent?

Lent is a 40-day period in which Christians remember the events leading up to Jesus Christ's death with prayers and fasting.

The Lent Season starts on Ash Wednesday and ends when the sun goes down on Holy Thursday. This does, however, not include Sundays.

Millions of Christians around the world give things up during lent as a symbol of sacrifice to honor Jesus Christ and the sacrifice he made for us.

Most people will pick food, a hobby, or a habit to give up for lent. The following are suggested things to GIVE and GIVE UP during lent.

Give thanks

Give compliments

Give forgiveness

Give encouragement

Give hope

Give attention to virtue

Give time to prayer

Give respect

Give help

Give time to God

Give up complaining

Give up harsh judgments

Give up revenge

Give up negativism

Give up despair

Give up sin

Give up wasting your time

Give up prejudice

Give up selfishness

Give up what keeps you from God

Submitted by Judy Tilly

Friday, March 7, 2025

When God winks at you:

Have you ever heard of a “God Wink”? In a wonderful book by Squire Rushnell, he states a “God Wink” is how God speaks directly to us through the Power of Coincidence.

Don Knotts’s Big Day:

Don Knotts was a struggling New York actor in the mid 50’s waiting for his big break. Late one afternoon he learned a casting agent was holding auditions for a new Broadway play. Wishing not to miss the event, he quickly rushed to the subway dashing through traffic to the building only to be told by the assistant it was finished.

Out of breath he hung his head, slowly turned, slumped out down the steps and back to the subway. He was about to take another step to enter when he heard a voice say “wait”. He turned to see the assistant calling him from the second-floor office window to come back. The assistant smiled saying in a whisper that he looked so sad that she told her boss he just had to see him.

Don was given a few pages of script from the new play, *No Time for Sergeants*, and learned a few days later he had gotten his break. It was one of the most auspicious events in his life as he was acting with Andy Griffith.

I knew every time I had a wonderful coincidence, it was GOD! I just never knew it was a “God Wink”.

Submitted by Shawne Heeren

Saturday, March 8, 2025

After saying this Jesus was troubled in spirit and declared, “Very truly, I tell you, one of you will betray me.” *John 13:21 NRSV*

John shares these words after telling of Jesus’ washing each disciple’s feet. “Troubled in spirit” – have you been betrayed by someone close to you?

Throughout his ministry, Jesus had encountered many threats and challenges from the Jewish religious and political leaders who both questioned his authority and feared that it would decrease theirs. But it was one from his own fellowship who did him in.

Yet Jesus offered Judas the same bread and wine that everyone else received! Judas ate and drank at the Lord’s Supper! Of all the examples of inclusion offered to us by Jesus in the course of his ministry, none is more powerful than this. Radical love. Amazing grace. In his actions, Jesus made it clear that he was giving his disciples an example that they were supposed to follow. “Love one another.” Jesus called it a new commandment, but on the surface that was not true. Loving others was at the heart of God’s first covenant with the people and Jesus had previously identified loving one another as the second greatest commandment. The radical nature of this love is shown in his story of the good Samaritan.

But Jesus adds “as I have loved you.” Jesus expected his disciples to wash the feet of others and to offer grace even to those who turn on us. Faith is realized in works, and, without action, faith is dead. (James 2:14-26) The world says, “You are what you do,” and there is truth in that. But the bigger truth is “You do what you are.” If we say we have faith, we must show it. Jesus modeled love and grace to all. Even Judas? Yes, even Judas. As recipients of that grace, we are called to love and serve throughout this Lenten season, and always.

Dear God, work in me so that my faith is action, not just spoken. Amen.

Submitted by Barbara Gaither

Monday, March 10, 2025

“Let Me be Me!”

In today's world we have lots of situations, events, and disasters that we are presented with. We are asked to form an opinion on each. We are influenced by people who speak the loudest, spend the most money promoting their opinion, or by those who have the most backing from others. But what factors should I be making my decision on how I really think and react to the event. I do not want to be encumbered by all those outside influences and just form my own opinion.

In the book of Romans Chapter 12, verse 2, we get some guidance on how to do just that:

“Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

Paul tells us to abandon the chance to fit in or be with the crowd and stop living like everyone else. Instead, he urges us to be transformed from the inside out. Specifically, he writes that we must be changed in how we think, to have our minds renewed so that we can begin to understand God's will for our lives.

I believe if we follow Paul's words we will sleep better at night with our decisions. What better time to start than during the Lenten Season.

Submitted by Rick Diak

Tuesday, March 11, 2025

HEBREWS 2:10

It was fitting that God should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering.

Why did God need to “make Jesus perfect?” There is a kind of perfection that comes only by experience. Jesus entered into the sufferings of this world and emerged victorious over them. He was completed in his experience on the earth by the things he suffered.

Christ came to blaze a trail for us. But the trail is marked with suffering, tears, rejection, and the trail leads to the cross. But Jesus is not just leading us to heaven. He is leading us to glory. There is glory at the end of the Christian life. Jesus came from heaven so we might follow him in suffering, and like him, be made complete through suffering. This explains so much what happens to us. He is leading us to Glory one step at a time. Remember that your suffering is part of Christ’s plan to complete his work in you.

Lord Jesus, we bow before you today. We gladly confess you as the Author of our Salvation. Complete your work in us no matter what it takes. We look forward to the day when we will be with you in glory.

Amen.

Submitted by Martha Jones

From (in part) a free devotional book titled “Faces at the Cross”.

Wednesday, March 12, 2025

“Joyful Noise” is a 2012 film that starred Queen Latifah and Dolly Parton. They were both members of the Divinity Church Choir, however, their views on the musical style most likely to position them to win a national competition differed. At one point, Vi Rose (Queen Latifah) is really struggling, even depressed. She walks into the darkened sanctuary, sits down at a piano and soulfully sings a song I had never heard before, “Fix Me, Jesus”. You can imagine my surprise when I found that it appears in our United Methodist Hymnal (# 655)! The verses are slightly different, but the message is much the same.

Many times, this song has resonated deep within my soul. When my spirit was too grieved to form words for a prayer, this song helped me reach upward to God. As I contemplate the Lenten Season this year, I don’t just want to sing this when I am at my lowest or at the end of my rope. I want it to be my theme song. I want Jesus to fix my heart, to direct my steps onto the path he would have me follow.

*“Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a right spirit within me.”*

Psalms 51:10

I encourage you to read the words of this song in our hymnal and to listen to Queen Latifah sing “Fix Me, Jesus” by clicking on the link below.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5hieoU5Ig0Y>

Dear Father, drive out anything in my heart that is impure. Cleanse me.
Guide me. Fix Me! Amen

Submitted by Nancy Rivers

Thursday, March 13, 2025

When I was a young Bible teacher, a friend once asked me to go with him to a Bible study taught by Paul Arthur who was a mail carrier during weekdays and a fervent Bible teacher at other times. The study was on Galatians. One evening, with great emotion, he quoted Apostle Paul's words from Galatians 2:20 in his teaching. It was evident that Paul Arthur sought to live this text every day of his life. My heart was so moved by the words of this text that I also committed it to memory for I desire to live my life this way. In my personal devotions I often quote this text. Maybe you would like to do the same, and, when you do, let the Holy Spirit within you lead you to a deeper commitment in your Christian Walk.

The text is:

“ I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”Galatians 2:20. ESV.

I encourage you to choose some Bible texts, write them all on paper, and use them in your devotions. They will become your friends.

Submitted by Pastor Bob Romanello

Friday, March 14, 2025

There have been a few dates in your life when the belief in Jesus has carried you through rough times. Mine occurred when I was in the US Air Force, stationed in the middle of the Sahara Desert.

Once a week we would receive a supply plane. On the plane normally came a religious (preacher, priest or rabbi) teacher to do Sunday church service. There came a time when no one came. The group who would normally show up asked me to do the service. Me? The biggest sinner. Me? Then I realized Jesus goes after the one, he went after me... thank you lord. ...

Submitted by James V. Wolfe

Saturday, March 15, 2025

It is the power of the resurrection on the horizon ahead that draws us into repentance toward the cross and tomb. Through the intervention of God's gracious resurrection, lifelong changes in our values and behavior become possible. By turning from the end of the "old self" in us, Lenten repentance makes it possible for us to affirm joyfully, "Death is no more!" and to aim toward the landscape of the new age. Faithfully adhering to the Lenten journey of "prayer, fasting and almsgiving" leads to the destination of Easter.

Therefore, at the beginning of Lent, we are reminded that our possessions, our rulers, our empires, our projects, our families and even our lives do not last forever. "You are dust, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19). The liturgies throughout Lent try to pry loose our fingers, one by one, from presumed securities and plunge us into unknown baptismal waters, waters that turn out to be not only our death tomb but surprisingly our womb of life. Rather than falling back into nothingness, we fall back on everlasting arms. Death? How can we fear what we have already undergone in baptism?

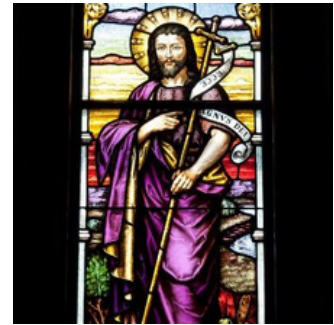
Submitted by Margaret Bryson

Monday, March 17, 2025

Easter



Our Lord Jesus Christ
Was born on this Earth
To die for our sins
And give us all rebirth



His message was love
To our sisters and brothers
He wanted us all
To share kindness with others



He created miracles
He made the blind see
He spread God's word
To be passed on for you and me



He suffered on a cross
With his arms spread wide
Impossible to believe
For our sins he died



But then it came,
The miracle of Jesus's life
He stood and he walked
To spread the word of Eternal life



As the joy that was Easter
Is now passed down to us
We need to be thankful
To God's only son, Jesus



By Robin Zelaya

submitted by Ruth Orwig

Tuesday, March 18, 2025

From Jon Meachum's book, "The Hope of Glory-Reflections on the Last Words of Jesus from the Cross", reflects on the first saying of Jesus:

"Forgive them for they know not what they do."

Christ's followers had fled the scene for they had expected victory not defeat. Most all the Jews who followed Christ had expected God's kingdom to start with his entrance into Jerusalem. Where was Isaiah's promise that one day, even one hour of reckoning and reconciliation would come with the Messiah? Was Jesus saying this for their failure to understand what God was setting in motion? Also, was this for those that had persecuted him?

Yes, I think so. It might also apply to us today when we fail to listen to Jesus' teaching and in our unchristian actions against others. From the father's offering of his son, it is a reminder of self-giving love. Jon states that out of the "Christian story lies love, not hate, grace, not rage, mercy, not vengeance.

Submitted by George Dickinson

Wednesday, March 19, 2025

The reflection on the second uttering from Jesus from Jon Meacham's book, "The Hope of Glory," comes after the criminal who states to the other criminal being crucified with Christ:

"If you are the Christ save yourself and us." The second criminal replies"...this man has done nothing wrong; Lord remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus replies: "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in paradise."

To Jon, the forgiveness of "this sympathetic insurgent underscores the mystery of Jesus's love and of the inscrutability of faith." Paradise is drawn from the Persian word for garden or an enclosed park. It is his promise to us. It is that God is "all powerful and far beyond our control and our comprehension."

Jon goes on to state that "we may one day dwell in communion with the Lord and all those he has chosen to forgive. For we will need that forgiveness and that grace every bit as much as the condemned man who had the wisdom to call out to Jesus."

Submitted by George Dickinson

Thursday, March 20, 2025

James 1:5 (NIV)

"If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you"

Life is full of decisions—some small, others life-changing. In moments of uncertainty, it's easy to rely on our own understanding or seek advice from the world around us. However, God invites us to turn to Him for wisdom that surpasses human knowledge. James 1:5 reminds us that when we lack wisdom, all we need to do is ask. God doesn't withhold wisdom or criticize us for seeking His guidance. Instead, He gives generously and graciously, always ready to provide clarity and direction.

Seeking God's wisdom requires humility and trust. It means acknowledging that His ways are higher than ours and that His perspective is eternal. Through prayer and time in His Word, we can find the discernment we need to navigate life's uncertainties with confidence.

If you are facing a difficult decision today, take it to God. Ask for His wisdom with faith, knowing He will provide the guidance you need. Trust that He sees the bigger picture and will lead you in the right direction. His wisdom brings peace, clarity, and assurance that you are walking in His will.

Prayer: Lord, I seek Your wisdom today. Guide my steps and help me trust in Your perfect plan. Amen.

Submitted by Russ Williamson

Friday, March 21, 2025

Be Prepared

I like to cook. But, that wasn't always the case. Years ago, I was challenged to help out more at our home in Atlanta - the challenge came from my sweet wife. I will omit the "discussion" that ensued. As a result of the "discussion", I decided to take on the cooking for our family. After all, I had taken chemistry in high school and college and knew how to read. How hard could it be? I also had it in the back of my head that this experiment would go horribly wrong, and my wife would come to her senses and continue as we had been with our domestic division of labor.

I had no particular skill (other than the ability to read and those chemistry courses) when it came to cooking - I knew how to heat food someone else had cooked and I could mix batter for pancakes. So where to start? I reached for the red and white checkerboard *Better Homes and Gardens* cookbook that Susan and I had received as a wedding gift - along with every other prenuptial couple of the day. As I read the recipes, I realized there were terms used in cooking that were unfamiliar. "Separate the eggs". I had seen the Three Stooges separate 2 eggs by simply moving them apart. "Beat until stiff peaks form and fold the egg whites into the batter." How stiff is stiff? Fold? I was dealing with a thick liquid which I deemed unfoldable. Did I mention this was all before the internet - there were no videos, just the memory of my mother doing these things.

Here's where stupidity played a mighty role. I was too ignorant about what I was doing to fear making a mistake. I admit to being fortunate: everything I cooked seemed to be more than passable to eat. And, a huge plus: my wife didn't mind cleaning up. The more I cooked, the more adventurous cooking became; shrimp etouffee, carrot cake, cinnamon rolls, and chicken piccata.

Along the way, I realized our kitchen didn't have all the right tools - I had socket sets, nut drives, pliers, wire cutters, and electric tools of every description among my mechanic's tools. We now have decent knives, a stand mixer, and proper baking sheets.

So what is the secret to cooking? Preparation: know the requirements for each step in a recipe and organize the ingredients and tools before beginning.

Likewise, Lent is a time of preparation. Think of Lent as a 40-day meal composed of praying, fasting, almsgiving, and abstinence. Each "dish" has ingredients that make it unique but are also reflective of the one doing the "cooking". Bon Appetit!

Selah!

submitted by Les Spencer

Saturday, March 22, 2025

The season of Lent consists of four areas where we as Christians can improve ourselves spiritually. **1) Reflection; 2) Spiritual Growth; 3) Sacrifice; and 4) Contribution.**

Here are scriptures that address each:

1 Peter 5:6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you.

We must be completely honest with God. Let Him know how helpless we are so we can receive the help God has for us.

Mark 1:12-13 At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

Jesus spent 40 days of spiritual growth. Maybe a Lenten retreat could help you grow spiritually.

Matthew 6:16-18 And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites...but when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your father who is in secret. And your father who sees it in secret will reward you.

Fast in secret or keep to yourself what you are depriving yourself of for Lent. Your secret is between you and God.

Isaiah 58:6-7 Is this not the fast that I choose; to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house....

Giving and helping are other ways to make a Lenten fast. Taking on as you give up.

Prayer: Our Father who guides us in all things. Help us to use this season of Lent to improve ourselves and make us loving blessings to others. Amen

submitted by Brenda Stowe

Monday, March 24, 2025

A woman and her young toddler went into a restaurant to have lunch. The child was 3 years old and very talkative.

The restaurant was full and there were few seats available, but the hostess found a table for them, and they sat down and quickly started discussing what they wanted to order. There was a man sitting at a table next to them who immediately loudly objected to their being seated next to him. He said to the waitress I'm not paying good money to listen to the noise and fussiness of a child. The waitress said to him there isn't any other seat available, and she also turned to the woman and mouthed I'm sorry. The woman gestured to the waitress to not be concerned, and she ordered their meal. When it arrived, she and her daughter ate their meal and talked about a book that the child had brought with her and the food they were eating.

When they finished their meal, the woman motioned the waitress and said they were ready to leave and could she have her bill. The waitress said the bill had been paid for by the man who had earlier complained about sitting next to them. He told the waitress the child was very well behaved and had created no extra noise or fuss. He was too embarrassed to apologize to the woman directly but wanted to pay for their meal to make up for it.

“Be kind, compassionate, and forgiving, and make allowances for others' faults” Colossians 3:12-13

Submitted by Melissa Morse

Tuesday, March 25, 2025

*"Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." –
Matthew 6:12*

Lent is a time of deep reflection, repentance, and growth. As we journey toward the cross, we are called to examine our hearts and lives, especially in how we relate to others. One of the most challenging aspects of the Christian walk is forgiveness. I know at times it has been for me. It's easy to say we forgive, but it is much harder to truly let go of hurt and anger. Yet, forgiveness is at the heart of our faith.

In Matthew 6:12, Jesus teaches us to ask for forgiveness and also reminds us that our forgiveness is linked to how we forgive others. This is a profound truth. God has forgiven all of us, including me, for so much—our sins, our mistakes, and our rebellion against Him. When we truly grasp the magnitude of God's forgiveness in our own lives, we are called to extend that same grace to others.

The cross is the ultimate picture of forgiveness. Jesus, in His agony, prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34). If Christ can forgive those who crucified Him, how much more can we forgive the people who have hurt us in smaller ways?

Forgiveness is not always about forgetting, nor is it always about reconciliation. Sometimes forgiveness is simply releasing the bitterness and allowing God to heal the hurt. It's about freeing ourselves from the power that others' actions have over us.

Forgiveness is a choice, not a feeling. It requires trust in God's justice and mercy, knowing that He is able to heal what we cannot. As you journey through this Lenten season, may your heart be filled with the peace that comes from forgiving others as you have been forgiven.

PRAYER:

Lord, You have forgiven me so much, and I am deeply grateful for Your grace and mercy. Help me to extend that same forgiveness to others, especially those who have hurt me. Soften my heart, Lord, and give me the strength to release bitterness and anger. Heal the wounds that I hold within, and help me to live out Your love and forgiveness in all my relationships. Thank You for the gift of forgiveness through Jesus Christ.

Amen.

submitted by Lisa Henley

Wednesday, March 26, 2025

The Woman at the Well: *"Jesus answered her, 'Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.'"*
~John 4:13-14

As we journey through this Lenten season, we are invited to reflect on our own thirst—for God, for purpose, for fulfillment. In John 4, we encounter a powerful story of Jesus meeting a Samaritan woman at a well. This seemingly ordinary encounter turns into a life-changing conversation that reveals much about our relationship with Jesus and the grace he offers.

The woman arrives at the well in the middle of the day, likely to avoid the crowds and the judgment of others. She carries a heavy load of isolation, shame, and unmet needs. Yet, Jesus meets her right where she is, both physically and spiritually. He speaks to her with compassion, offering her something she had longed for but never found: **living water.**

Jesus's offer of "living water" isn't just about quenching physical thirst; it's a deeper, spiritual thirst that we all carry. The water Jesus offers is the promise of eternal life, of fulfillment beyond what the world can offer. It's a reminder that all the things we seek—approval, success, possessions—will never truly satisfy our deepest needs. Only in Jesus do we find the source of life that nourishes us in ways nothing else can.

Reflecting on Lent: Lent is a season of thirst—a thirst for renewal, for healing, and for deeper intimacy with God. Just as the woman came to the well seeking water, we, too, come before God with our own longings. But Jesus invites us to come to him with the expectation that our thirst will be satisfied not by anything of this world, but by his presence.

What are you thirsting for this Lent? Is there something in your life that you are searching for to fill that emptiness? Perhaps you're seeking peace, forgiveness, purpose, or healing. Whatever it may be, Jesus offers the living water that alone can satisfy our deepest desires.

In this Lenten season, let us take time to reflect on where we are looking to be filled. Are we going to the wells of the world, or are we seeking Jesus—the well that never runs dry?

PRAYER:

Lord Jesus, thank you for offering us living water that never runs dry. As we journey through this season of Lent, help us recognize the areas of our lives where we are still thirsty, still searching. May we come to you each day, knowing that only you can quench our deepest longings. Fill us with your presence and renew our spirits, so that we may share the good news of your love and grace with others.

Amen.

submitted by Mallory Capps, St. John's Children & Youth Director

Thursday, March 27, 2025

"Whoever welcomes one of these children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me isn't actually welcoming me but rather the one who sent me." Mark 9:37

As a group, we talked about Lent, and how it serves as a time to draw closer to God through discipline and reflection. Below are our plans for this year's observance of Lent, shared by the 2nd-5th Grade Sunday School Class and several Youth from St. John's.

Amber B. – Start learning another language

Brice R. – Study

Christina H. – Donate toys to other children

Elenor B. – Practice sign language

Katelyn F. – Read more

Katherine B. – Dedicate time each day for devotions

Landry C. – Practice more soccer

Matteo N. – Play outside more versus being on electronics

Piper B. – Read more

Ruth B. – Spend more time learning the piano

William I. – Giving up added sugar

-Compiled by Katherine Burns and Amber Boan
(2nd-5th Grade Sunday School Teachers)

Friday, March 28, 2025

Matthew 11:28-30 (NIV)

I was once driving along a graveled country road with my father-in-law, and when I rounded a curve, I saw something now seldom seen. I saw a farmer walking alongside a heavy wooden cart pulled along by a yoke of oxen. My father-in-law said to me, **“Bob, when you are training oxen, you never yoke two young ones together. You always train a young ox by yoking it with an older ox.”** My mind immediately raced to the words of Jesus when He said, **“Come unto me, all you who are worried and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”** (Matt. 11:28-30)

From these words, I wish for you a special image in life for you and your families to follow. Picture yourself yoked with Jesus and learn from his example and his teachings. If you live that way, what may seem to be a heavy burden may well pass away. This is especially true in relationships with family and others. “What would Jesus do?” is still a good question to ask oneself. The Golden Rule is still good advice to follow. It was Jesus who left that command with us. (Matt: 7:12)

Submitted by Rev. Bob Romanello

Saturday, March 29, 2025

Hearing vs Listening: Mark 4.9 *“He who has ears to hear, let him hear”*

Throughout the pages of Scripture, there’s a word that gets repeated: “hear” or a related word “listen”. Today’s culture places value on doing many things at once; we often try to listen while focusing on other tasks, which divides our attention. The sound of someone’s voice might come into our ears, but if we are scrolling social media, doing schoolwork, or making a meal, we might not fully understand their words.

But in the biblical context, “hearing” does not simply include sound reception; it also involves active obedience and an effort to understand.

In Mark 4.9, Jesus invites us to listen – to hear and obey, encouraging us to pay careful attention to His words: “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

Jesus isn’t just asking us to audibly hear His words and carry on with our personal agenda; He’s urging us to actively listen and obey to live by His truth. Listening and obeying are what build our faith in Jesus Christ. Hearing the Word of God should lead to a transformed life marked by fruitfulness.

During this Lent season I encourage you to reflect on the idea of listening in Scripture, consider your heart and spiritual receptivity. Are you attentive to God’s Word, allowing it to transform your life, or is your hearing divided causing you to resist his call?

Submitted by Debbie Rouse

Reference U – Version the Bible App.

Monday, March 31, 2025

Jesus Christ - God loves you.

I love Jesus with all my heart, and with all my soul.

And He is with you always.

Jesus is in your heart, too.

Angels are all around you.

I like knowing God the best.

Jesus is my friend.

I know that Jesus loves me.

My hands belong to you Lord,

I lift them up to you Lord.

My heart belongs to you.

I know that I love Him.

Jesus you're all I need!

Submitted by Kristie Edwards

Tuesday, April 1, 2025

Psalm 23:1

The Lord is my Shepherd
I shall not be in want.

A child of the Most High God.

Submitted by Darren Edwards

Wednesday, April 2, 2025

Jesus Wept – John 11:35

“Jesus wept.” The shortest verse in the Bible carries deep meaning. It shows us the humanity of Jesus and the depth of His compassion. When Jesus arrived at Lazarus’s tomb, He already knew He had the power to raise him from the dead. Yet, when He saw the grief of Mary, Martha, and the others, He was moved to tears.

Jesus wept because He cared. He entered into the pain of those around Him, sharing their sorrow and reminding us that God is not distant from our suffering. His tears reveal that it’s okay to grieve, even when we have faith in God’s ultimate plan.

This verse reminds us that Jesus understands our struggles. He is a Savior who knows what it means to feel loss, sadness, and pain. When we face difficulties, we can find comfort in knowing that Jesus weeps with us and for us.

Take heart today—no matter what you are going through, Jesus is with you. He sees your pain, feels your sorrow, and walks with you in it. And just as He brought hope and life to Lazarus’s story, He can bring hope to yours.

Submitted by Elisabeth Williamson

Thursday, April 3, 2025

*Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father.
There is no shadow of turning with Thee.
Thou changest not,
Thy compassions they fail not.
As Thou hast been Thou forever will be.*

We've all been disappointed. Maybe you've even doubted God's affection toward you or been angry that things aren't the way they're supposed to be. When is God going to step up and make it right?

Thomas Chisholm was 27 years old when he penned this hymn. He was a sickly man whose favorite Bible passage is found in Lamentations—the part that ends in “great is thy faithfulness” (KJV).

Chisholm had plenty of reasons to be discouraged throughout his years of poor health. And yet, this song is a testament to the way God carried him—and carries us—through life's hard places.

It's a reminder that we aren't forgotten. That God is consistent. That He provides “*strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow.*”

“Time after time,” Billy Graham once said, “the Bible turns our attention to God's faithfulness and the supernatural life he works in us through the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Admittedly, the Almighty's constant loyalty can slip past our radar and go completely unnoticed. His faithfulness toward us isn't always expressed in some big, saved-from-the-furnace display, and in our own inward focus, we can miss the many little ways He stays true.

Composer and author Greg Scheer once said of Chisholm's famous song: “The hymn reminds us that God doesn't only work in dramatic or miraculous ways, but also in simple, everyday ways. It also reminds us that Jesus has never failed us in the past, so we have no reason to doubt his faithfulness in the future.”

submitted by Charlene Williams

Friday, April 4, 2025

MY HEART REJOICES IN THE LORD.

1 SAMUEL 2:1

Do you have Joy in your life? In 1 Samuel Chapter 1, we are introduced to Hannah, a woman who was distraught beyond comfort by her circumstances. She sought the help of her Lord through earnest prayer, and God answered her prayers. In Samuel Chapter 2, she composed a hymn of thanksgiving which began “Rejoice in the Lord”.

Our expressions of joyful thanksgiving reverberate through history! HOW? When we exhibit a joyful and thankful attitude, it's transmitted to others. Through them it is transmitted to others. And so, our joy in the Lord passes from generation to generation. When we approach life with a joyful spirit, it leaves a lasting legacy.

So, as Paul says in Philippians 3:1, Rejoice in the Lord. Then Phil. 4:4 he also wrote “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say Rejoice!” Share your joy and thankfulness at what the Lord has done for you and share your joy at his many gifts, his faithfulness to keep his promises, and his mercy and unending love.

Rejoice!

Your joy will be multiplied for yourself and also in others!

Submitted by Martha Jones

Saturday, April 5, 2025

The Gift

Each morning when I awake,

There sits the box;

Wrapped in the purity of God's Love,

Tied neatly with a Crimson Ribbon.

(The Blood of Jesus Christ)

As I untie the Ribbon and peer inside,

I behold God's Love, Mercy and Grace

Waiting for me, afresh for the new day.

"This is the day that the Lord has made;

Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Psalm 118:24

Please Read Scripture

Ephesians 2:8

1st. Peter 4:10

Written By Dr. W.S. Mayes, Jr.

Monday, April 7, 2025

Jeremiah 29:11

“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.”

I have been reading Jeremiah recently. I admit that I thought I would finish this Bible book before now as it is a very short book compared to others. But I am still at it.

Jeremiah's messages tend to be lots of doom and gloom. It was a difficult time for God's people. The Babylonians invaded Judah and defeated them. Many were carried off to Babylon. Jeremiah tells the people that 70 years will pass before they return to Jerusalem.

While they are in Babylon, Jeremiah tells the people to build houses, to plant gardens, to eat the fruits of their gardens, and to marry and have children. They are to worship the Lord; to pray; to love their fellow man. They are to go on living their lives with hope. They are not to look back in sorrow on the past.

“For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.”

Today, with all the destruction in the world, fires, floods, cold weather and other weather events, we need hope more than ever. And it wouldn't hurt to spend a little more time in prayer to God.

Submitted by Elaine Cryderman

Tuesday, April 8, 2025

A number of years ago I attended an Ash Wednesday service where the sermon was titled “Monday Night Football and Lent” that has stuck with me for years. Recall when we were younger, NFL games were not broadcast anywhere near like they are today. At best a person might get to see a couple games on Sunday, but we could always look forward to Monday Night Football with Howard Cosell and “Dandy” Don Meredith.

I was seldom allowed to stay up late enough on Monday nights to see the entire game, but on those few occasions I remember “Dandy” Don would start to croon “Turn Out the Lights, the Party’s Over” whenever it became clear that the game was decided. This meant the game was out of reach for the losing side and the party ended for them.

During the season of Lent, many of us use this as a time of self-reflection and as a time of denial when we “give up” a treat or something extra. So, during this time of denial, the “party” is over.

Think back to the first disciples. They saw their leader crucified and his body placed in the tomb. I can not help but feel they thought the “party “ was over for them as the person they had followed for the past several years was now taken away from them, and I would imagine they felt lost and abandoned. Their light had been turned off with the death of their leader.

Fortunately, we all know that the party does not end on Good Friday, but instead we are all invited to share in the greatest party of them all on Easter Sunday. So, while the season of lent is a short time when the lights have been turned off and the party is over, we can all rest assured that the party definitely resumes, and our lights shine bright on Easter Sunday.

Submitted by Steve Siebert

Wednesday, April 9, 2025

The tiny Mouse raced through the forest floor. The raging fire was just behind.

He jumped into the bark of the Douglas fir, pleading with the giant tree for protection.

“Come little one,” said the Tree. “Climb up to the cones. Snuggle in, there you will find protection and food.”

The little creature pushed his way in; he rested, he ate; he felt renewed.

After awhile he peeked out. The fire had moved on, diminishing its devastation and eventually burned out.

The Mouse thanked the Tree. “Come to me any time you are in danger or are troubled,” said the Tree. “I will welcome you and comfort you and feed you.”

Amen

During a September visit to Vancouver Island, British Columbia, I visited Cathedral Grove Forest. To see old growth forest of Douglas Fir, some 8 feet in diameter, over 300 feet tall, and 500 years old is magnificent. The First Nation tale of the mouse and tree grew from the shape and scales of the pine cone: in between the layers there appear tiny little mouse tails.

Most of our days are good; some days we seek the shelter of Our LORD. “Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

submitted by Lizann Rex



Thursday, April 10, 2025

I collect Prayers. Like coupons they are stuffed everywhere. In my Bibles, my prayer basket, above the sink, taped all around the bathroom mirror.

My first prayer collected was from my fourth grade teacher's thank you note. **"Dear Father, hear and bless thy beasts and singing birds. And guard with tenderness small things that have no words."**

Celtic Christians moved into Britain when the Romans moved out during the fifth century. The Celt gatherings were more community than the far reaching Romans.

This Prayer is calm with word pictures to sweep away worries:

Deep Peace

Deep Peace of the Running Wave to you

Deep Peace of the Flowing Air to you

Deep Peace of the Quiet Earth to You

Deep Peace of the Shining Stars to you

Deep Peace of the Gentle Night to you.

Moon and Stars pour their Healing Light on you

Deep Peace of the Son of Peace to you

**And Jesus Christ, Chief of Chiefs, our Great Shepherd,
be your Constant Companion.**

Amen

submitted by Lizann Rex

Friday, April 11, 2025

Our LORD created laughter, I believe, to be used with gusto, even during Lent. I hope this prayer will have you giggling but also see the opportunity to remind us of things important:

17th Century Nun's Prayer

LORD, thou know better than I know myself that I am growing older and will someday be old. Keep me from the fatal habit of thinking I must say something on every subject and on every occasion. Release me from craving to straighten out everybody's affairs. Make me thoughtful but not moody; helpful but not bossy. With my vast store of wisdom it seems a pity not to use it all, but Thou knowest LORD that I want a few friends in the end.

Keep my mind free from the recital of endless detail; give me wings to the point. Seal my lips on my aches and pains. They are increasing and my love for rehearsing them is becoming sweeter as the years go by. I dare not ask for grace enough to enjoy the tale of others' pains but help me to endure them with patience. I dare not ask for improved memory, but for a growing humility and a lessening cocksureness when my memory seems to clash with the memories of others. Teach me the glorious lesson that occasionally I may be mistaken.

Keep me reasonably sweet. I do not want to be a Saint – some of them are so hard to live with – but a sour old person is one of the crowning works of the devil. Give me the ability to see good things in unexpected places and talents in unexpected people. And give me, O LORD, the ability to tell them so.

submitted by Lizann Rex

Saturday, April 12, 2025

Last week, I was sitting at home on a snowy day off from school and pondering what to share for a Lenten devotional. As I looked out at the wintry day, the following story came to mind:

A farmer and his family up north were preparing to head out to the Christmas Eve service. They'd have to navigate their way to church through a snowstorm. The snow had been falling since morning. Now, with night falling, the snow was deep and the air colder.

As the family dressed for church, the farmer pushed his way out to the barn to check on the livestock. He was surprised to see several small birds fluttering around the big door into the barn. Strange to see birds around here this time of year, he thought. The birds had probably been blown off course by the storm as they tried to fly south.

Well, the farmer thought that he'd open the barn door and coax the birds inside where they would be safe from the storm.

So, he pushed the big barn door open. But when he did so, the birds fluttered away and sat on the fence, because they were frightened by him. He stood just inside the door, trying to speak to the birds, trying to coax them in the barn. But of course, the birds couldn't understand him and they kept their distance, watching him from the fence.

The farmer grabbed some grain from the cow stall and tossed it toward the birds to get their attention. Then he made a path of grain from the door toward the fence. He hoped that the birds would see the grain and, kernel by kernel, hop their way back toward the barn.

But no such luck. Though the birds were obviously freezing, they did not risk hopping toward the warmth of the barn, fearful of the farmer.

He had tried everything he could think of. In frustration he thought to himself, “If only I could become one of them. They would surely respond to another bird and come into the safety of the barn. If only...”

At that moment he heard the bells of the little church in the village, calling people to worship, telling the world about a God who loved us so much that God came to us as one of us.¹

Pastor Charles Anderson writes, “We need a higher love. Someone who loves us within our very darkness. Someone who loves us despite our own confusion. Someone who loves us beyond our own abilities to love others or even ourselves. We need a higher love.”

I am so grateful today for a Savior who not only came down to live with us, but also one who poured out His blood, broke His body and gave His life that we might be with Him forever.

Submitted by Jennifer Isenhour

Monday, April 14, 2025

“PEACE”

Isaiah 26:3 “He will keep in perfect peace all those who trust in him, whose thoughts turn often to the Lord.”

What is perfect peace talked about in Isaiah and how do we get it?

Scripture says to fix our thoughts on Jesus, stay in touch with him by our spoken word, song, and written word. That means to study his word and let it talk to us, so it will change the way we think and live.

I listen to and sing Christian music during my day. The more that I add to my day that includes Jesus, the more at peace I become. He quiets my worries and gives me joy and love.

I hope all who read and study these devotions will also add more peace to their lives.

(republished from 2021) when submitted by Janet Tracey

Tuesday, April 15, 2025

John 16:33

“I have told you these things, so that in me you might have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

Jesus and his disciples had just finished The Last Supper and it was just before He was arrested. He was trying to tell them what was going to happen. Finally, after three years they were beginning to understand what He was telling them.

As we go through Lent maybe our goal should be to better understand what Jesus has told us in the scriptures. As was His style, Jesus always got right to the point. “In this world you will have trouble.”

After the year we have all been through, we do not have to be reminded of that! Who could have thought we would spend a whole year wearing masks, socially distancing, and going to church on YouTube. For some of us the pandemic is just a small part of the problem. In August I went to the doctor thinking I had a pulled muscle in my side. I left there with a diagnosis of liver cancer. As I write this, I am starting my tenth chemo treatment and I am doing well. I can never say thank you enough for all the prayers, thoughts, and cards I have received from you, my church family. I have the most wonderful nurse, Karen, at home that anyone could have. I am blessed and thankful, but the trouble is still there. Jesus told the disciples and tells us that yes, the troubles are always there, but we can have peace. We can take heart. How? By believing in and placing our faith in Him, who has overcome the world.

Father,

Thank you for all you have done and continue to do for us. Thank you that through your death and resurrection you have overcome the world and bring us peace and hope. Help us to be faithful.

(republished from 2021) when submitted by Tom Vinson

Wednesday, April 16, 2025

John 15:13 “There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” (NLT)

As I think about the 6-week period of Lent, I often ask myself – “What can I do during Lent to make Easter really “happen” for me this year?”

I am reminded of an experience that happened several years ago in my Sunday School class. My teacher was reading the scripture which told the story of Jesus carrying the cross as he walked painfully toward Golgotha and of his being severely flogged and beaten by the soldiers. Suddenly, she paused and cried for a moment. Then, she continued to read. The story was VERY real for her. It really “happened” for her.

Do I read the story of Jesus with that same kind of feeling? Perhaps if I spend more time reading the Bible, I will be able to feel some of the pain our Lord felt for us. Perhaps this year we can all spend more time thinking about the scriptures. Then we will be more keenly awakened to the dawn of Christ’s Resurrection on Easter morning as a very real “happening”.

Lord, thank you for the loving sacrifice of your only Son so we can have everlasting life.

Amen.

See, from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down:
Did e’er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

(From “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross”, v. 3)

(republished from 2021) when submitted by Carolyn Rowland

Thursday, April 17, 2025

Childlike Faith: Luke 18:15-17 (NIV)

"People were also bringing babies to Jesus for him to place his hands on them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. But Jesus called the children to him and said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.'"

During Lent, we are called to reflect on our faith and draw closer to Christ. In this passage, Jesus reminds us that the kingdom of God belongs to those who approach Him with childlike trust, openness, and humility. Children do not complicate faith with doubt or pride; they simply believe, love, and seek closeness.

How often do we overthink our relationship with God, placing conditions or expectations on His grace? Lent invites us to strip away distractions and return to a simple, sincere faith. Like a child reaching out to a loving parent, we are called to trust fully in God's presence and love.

As we journey toward Easter, may we embrace the kingdom of God with open hearts, letting go of fear, pride, or hesitation. Let us come to Jesus just as we are—His beloved children—knowing He welcomes us with open arms.

Reflection:

What is one way you can embrace a childlike faith today? How can you trust God more fully in this Lenten season?

Prayer:

Lord, help me to come to You with a childlike heart—full of trust, love, and humility. Strip away my doubts and fears, and draw me closer to You during this Lenten journey. Amen.

submitted by Mallory Capps, St. John's Children & Youth Director

Friday, April 18, 2025

Galatians 6:10 ~ "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers."

When I think of Lent, I believe the goal should be a time of drawing closer to God and reflecting on our lives. My mind often goes to, "What am I going to give up this year for Lent?" I remember back when I was addicted to Dr. Pepper, I gave it up for Lent. After Lent I never went back to more than one a week. I was happy that it worked for me. Some people give up many kinds of things, i.e., e.g. sweets, sugar, food, swearing, excessive spending, alcohol, etc.

But Lent doesn't have to be entirely about giving up something. We can also help serve others. I happen to like acronyms. One of my favorites is H.O.P.E. (Helping Other People Every day). Sometimes I think it is good to focus on "How can I help or serve others?". There are many who need help even right here in our own community. In helping others, we are being Jesus' hands and feet in the world. Helping others is such a good feeling and we are blest by giving as well. Also, when we encounter others, we leave deposits in their lives. Just a simple smile, an encouraging word, a meaningful touch, a listening ear, a food donation, and many other acts of service can significantly impact and mean so much to those in need. So, while we are giving up something at Lent, let's also give it to others. Galatians 6:10 encourages a life of service and compassion, where we use every opportunity to spread positivity and love, both within and beyond our Christian community.

One of the most important things you can do in any season is spend time intentionally and every day with God, through prayer and Bible reading.

As you observe this season of Lent, I pray that Lent will be a time of relationship building with fellow believers and growth in your relationship to Christ.

Submitted by David Rowland

Saturday, April 19, 2025

Perfectly Beautiful

“I praise you, for **I am fearfully and wonderfully made**. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.” (Psalm 139:13-14)

In a devotional book for teachers, Apples for a Teacher, I read a story about a little girl who was upset that her project didn't look perfect. Her teacher showed the girl one of the leaves they had been pressing between layers of waxed paper. Her teacher showed her all of the different leaves they were using for the project and asked: “Are any the same? Look at the tear in this one, the brown spots on another. How about this leaf where a caterpillar ate through the middle? Aren't they all beautiful?” The child agreed that they were.

She reminded the little girl that things don't have to be perfect to be good. She told her to turn the leaf over to see the beauty of the other side as well. She explained that the little girl could turn her leaf of paper over and start her project again.

I love the metaphor of turning over a new leaf. Essentially meaning to make a positive change and leave the past behind. More than that though, we need to remember that we are all wonderfully made according to God's plan. Our little tears and brown spots are what make us beautiful!

We all need to believe that we do not have to be perfect to be good.

Submitted by Amy Bartholomew

NOTES:

