



Lenten Devotionals

Lent 2020



MEDIA
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

30 E. Baltimore Avenue
Media, PA 19063

Introduction

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”
Colossians 3:16-17

Lent is a season of preparation when we ready ourselves for the approaching holy remembrance of the Lord’s sacrifice for us. This Devotional is made up of the thoughts, words and wisdom of your church leaders, provided as an encouragement throughout this season. Make it a practice to pray, read and ponder these verses and the insights of your church family members.
We hope that this devotional will be a blessing to you!

The Spiritual Formation Committee



Wednesday, February 26, 2020

Submitted by: Kate Meehan, Spiritual Formation Committee

Scripture: Psalm 51:1-17

Today's Devotion: It seems appropriate that today's devotion includes cleansing. Washing can be a physical act to wash away external dirt or disease, a ritual event for ceremony, or a spiritual action symbolizing repentance. For the physical act, I was reminded of the story of Naaman's healing found at 2 Kings 5. Naaman was an important military figure who contracted leprosy. His servant brought him to Elisha for healing. Elisha instructed Naaman to bathe in the Jordan River 7 times; he reluctantly did so, and was healed. The cleansing not only healed Naaman's skin, it healed his heart as he was able to experience God's power. Jewish tradition includes mikveh, which is the act of bathing for ritual purity. A literal bath is used to cleanse, purify and restore the individual under specific circumstances. In Psalm 51 we see spiritual cleansing. The Psalm was written by David after Nathan the prophet exposed to him David's ugly, despicable, dirty secrets. David had lusted after Bathsheba and committed adultery with her. When that sin resulted in a pregnancy, David orchestrated the murder of Bathsheba's husband. His heart was deep in the filth. David begs the Lord repeatedly to cleanse him, wash him, restore him, and forgive his sins. We know the Lord did so, and will do the same for us, no matter how vile or shameful our sins. This Psalm of praise, renewal and restoration is an appropriate way to begin Lent. Let us come into this holy time with hearts contrite and humble as David's, and let us too ask the Lord for forgiveness and cleansing of our hearts.

Prayer: Dearest Lord, I thank you that you see me, know me and all I have done and failed to do, and yet you love me anyway. You love me so much that you wash me clean with the blood of your beloved son. For that, I praise you. Amen.

Personal Reflection:

Thursday, February 27, 2020

Submitted by: Elder Steve Buxton

Scripture: Romans 1:1-7

Today's Devotion: This is the letter the Apostle Paul wrote to the Christian believers in Rome. As he is prone to do, he starts by offering his credentials by means of his calling to be an apostle. He then launches into his message. Paul offers a splendid summary of why we believe what we believe!

For centuries, God had provided insight to prophets via the Holy Spirit. The messages these prophets proclaimed, recorded, and became part of the Old Testament Scripture. They provided a roadmap preparing the way for the people to recognize the Messiah when He arrived on the scene.

Paul proclaims that Jesus is this long promised Messiah (Christ), and the Son of God. He points to His lineage as descended in human terms from King David. The Jewish people of the time understood well that anyone claiming to be the Messiah MUST be a descendant of David; as this was one of the promises proclaimed by the prophets.

How can we be assured Jesus was really the Son of God? Paul points to the resurrection as proof. The fact of the empty tomb was very evident to these first century believers. In another of his letters, Paul refers to hundreds of people who witnessed the resurrected Jesus and were still alive; available to be spoken with. The historical fact of the resurrection remains a solid foundation for us to stand on to this day!

The favor and blessings of God are heaped upon us, not due to any merit or deserving on our part, but strictly due to the atonement of Jesus Christ which He accomplished on the cross in paying for our many sins and reconciling us to God. This is what we call grace!

Prayer: Our Father and our God, thank you for your calling of the Apostle Paul. Thank you for the way he so clearly reminds us of the foundations of our faith and the solid ground on which our beliefs rest. Most of all, thank you Lord Jesus for atoning for me and paying the heavy price of my many sins on the cross. Help me to honor you with my life. In the name of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; Amen.

Personal Reflection:

Friday, February 28, 2020

Submitted by: Elder Joe Hare

Scripture: Psalm 130

Today's Devotion: The Lord is mentioned in every verse of this Psalm. The Psalmist is clearly focused upon God without distraction. What has brought him to this? Verse 3 tells us it is his sins. The sin of the Psalmist has caused him to sink to the depths and it is from here that he cries out to the Lord and makes his supplication before Him. He knows he is a sinner and confesses it before God, acknowledging that he cannot stand before a holy, righteous, and just God. The sinner acknowledges that if God were to judge him based upon his deeds that he could not bear to stand before God and would be utterly consumed by God's righteous wrath against his sin. Yet the Psalmist knows the Lord. He knows He is a merciful God that forgives, and he comes before Him in confidence, waiting upon Him and trusting in the promises of His Word that He will forgive (Psalm 103:3). The sin of the Psalmist has left him in dire straits; he mourns over his sin, and he knows that apart from the Lord there is no deliverance. He knows that his only hope is in the Lord. Desperate men will give full attention to the One upon whom they know their very lives depend.

Do you give full attention to the Lord? Have you felt the heavy conviction of your sin? Do not do as some people and turn away from God, but flee to Him, call out to Him from the pit of your despair. He is faithful and righteous and He will forgive us our sins (1 John 1:9) if we come to Him with a heart of repentance, confessing our sin and trusting His living Word, His Son Jesus Christ. If you have experienced His loving kindness do you give Him the attention He is due in your daily life? Do you rejoice always and pray without ceasing, thanking Him for life everlasting and daily grace? Are you constantly aware of the Lord's presence, grace, mercy, love, holiness and sovereignty? If not, give Him your attention. Give it to Him by being in His Word, in communion with Him in prayer, and in His service through a walk of holiness.

Prayer: Be merciful O Lord. Save us from our iniquity, transgression, and sin. Show Yourself merciful that we may praise Your holy name and rejoice in Your love for Your people. Deliver us from our sin, sanctify us in Your truth, glorify Your name in us. Amen .

Personal Reflection:

Saturday, February 29, 2020

Scripture: Matthew 18:1-7

Lectio Divina (“Divine Reading”) is a traditional Benedictine practice of scriptural reading, meditation and prayer intended to promote communion with God and to increase the knowledge of God’s word. It does not treat scripture as texts to be studied, but as the living word.

Follow the four steps:

1. Read the scripture
2. Meditate on the meaning of the scripture
3. Pray for God’s word to be revealed to you
4. Contemplate the Word of God and what message He might have for you.

Personal Reflection:

Sunday, March 1, 2020

Scripture readings:

- Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7
- Psalm 32
- Romans 5:12-19
- Matthew 4:1-11

Reflections on today's sermon or readings:

Monday, March 2, 2020

Submitted by: Elder Paul Tutton

Scripture: 1 Kings 19:1-9

Today's Devotion: The name Jezebel is commonly known today due to her being a horrendous example of treachery. Jezebel was queen to Ahab, an anointed king of Israel who ruled in a spectacularly corrupt fashion. We once named a cat Ahab; our friend had already named his litter-mate Jezebel, so it was a logical choice.

In our passage, King Ahab has just informed Jezebel of Elijah's triumphs as God's instrument in calling down fire from heaven, killing the prophets of Baal, and ending a three year drought. Jezebel, who clearly had the upper hand in this relationship, responded by threatening Elijah's life and causing him to flee into the wilderness. This is a timely passage for meditation; Israel was publicly experiencing failure of leadership and a major disruption in the very foundations of her faith. The nation was simultaneously experiencing a devastating drought and the man-made atrocities of murder and mayhem. Elijah was publicly experiencing God's power and blessing, while privately experiencing fear and despair.

In the wilderness, Elijah privately said "I have had enough, Lord, take my life..." as he laid under a bush and fell asleep. Elijah, who had just spent three trying years as God's agent; working powerful miracles and being under threat of death as a fugitive, was spent. God addressed Elijah's immediate needs by the touch of an angel, by food, by drink, and by rest. Elijah was a real person with real human limitations and responses; his reactions to his ordeal resemble what today we would describe as depression. Even though Elijah was finished at this point; God wasn't. After a period of rest, God sent him on yet another journey and when he arrived, God asked "What are you doing here, Elijah?" What an exasperating question! We usually don't know why we are here but we do know that we are called to "...run with patience, the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1). The Spirit of God will sustain us but this sustenance often comes in many forms, including food, drink, rest, and the loving touch of others.

Publicly, Elijah was asked to confront and condemn the evils of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel, in which he persisted at risk of his life. In the third temptation, Satan offered to Christ "... all the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them..." in exchange for worshiping him. Christ responded that we should worship the Lord God, and him only shall we serve. Elijah didn't worship the kingdoms of this world and neither should we.

Prayer: Lord, as we hear the loud clamor of our broken world, as we feel the disappointment of our own circumstances and relationships, as we feel the despair of our inner being, sustain us by your tender mercies and by the love of our family, friends, and fellow members of Christ's flock in the confidence that "...Your will be done, in Heaven as it is on Earth".

Personal Reflection:

Tuesday, March 3, 2020

You are a disciple of Christ. Relying on the Holy Spirit, you are responsible to live out Christ's teachings in the world.

Scripture: Genesis 4:1-16

Discipleship Exercise: Jesus commands us to love our enemies and to bless those who curse us. Enemies might be those who intentionally or negligently do us harm. List your enemies. Who springs to mind? Pray for each person on your list. Imagine what their needs are and how God views that person.

Prayer: Holy father, I ask that you bless each person on my list. They are a person full of faults and shortcomings, just as I am. Nevertheless, I know you created them and love them. I ask that you provide for all of their needs. Soften my heart towards each one. Teach me to view them as you view them. Help me to forgive as you forgave me. Thank you!

Personal Reflection:

Wednesday, March 4, 2020

Submitted by: Deacon Cindy McPeak

Scripture: Psalm 32

Today's Devotion: Upon reading Psalm 32, a peaceful joy flows through me. David is explaining to us how 'easy' it is to find 'songs of deliverance' when confessing our sins to our Father. He reiterates the idea that although there are times we want to keep silent, these are the moments when we find our 'bones wasting away.' Acknowledging our faults and talking to our Father about them will assure us of forgiveness and bring us to a sense of peace.

March 4th was my Dad's birthday and although he has been gone close to twelve years, his lessons and teachings remain with me. He was a good Father and encouraged me to live my life honestly and treat others fairly. I am grateful for his shining example.

Prayer: Father, allow me to confess my sins to you in an honest and straightforward way. Daily, remind me that your unfailing love is always there to surround me; I just need to continue to pray and listen for your assurance.

Personal Reflection:

Thursday, March 5, 2020

Submitted by: Deacon Robin Kauffman

Scripture: 2 Timothy 1:3-7

Today's Devotion: Reminders: a string tied around your finger, a post-it note where you can't miss it, an alarm on your phone. If we put ourselves in Timothy's place today, then our reminder comes in the form of a letter from his mentor, Paul. Paul misses Timothy, he prays for him and draws attention to his faith in God that has been passed along in his family. Then comes the reminder: You have gifts from God that need tending. What have you done or can you do today to tend your gifts? And if you don't know your gifts...ask God for a post-it note!

Prayer: Lord, Thank you for your Word. Walk with us today and put reminders in our path of our gifts. Amen.

Personal Reflection:

Friday, March 6, 2020

Submitted by: Elder Dee Casner

Scripture: Micah 7:18-20

Today's Devotion: Through the reign of three kings, the prophet Micah has preached the destruction and doom of Israel. He has denounced their wallowing in the pagan culture of the day, their evil deeds and their failure to walk with their God. He has proclaimed that God's judgement is coming. Micah calls Israel to repent for he knows repentance will bring God's Blessings instead of destruction.

In verse 7:18 Micah seems awestruck, asking - "**who is this God who pardons, forgives and does not stay angry because ... He *DELIGHTS* in *unchanging love.*"** *Is this not a glimpse of Jesus?*

From the depth of this Love, Jesus divested himself of his heavenly glory, humbled himself to come as a lowly infant, surrendered himself to the cross, death and hell. Christ gave the perfect sacrifice. The only one that can wash us clean and acceptable.

We are the new Israel, God's Beloved. But we too live in a pagan culture, have sinned and are called to repent. Jesus asks us to believe in Him and **accept His pardon, forgiveness and unchanging Love.** *It is only in this acceptance that His Love changes us and those around us.*

Prayer: Dear Lord, help me to stay awestruck by your steadfast love. Keep me open to your forgiveness, so that you may work through me. Amen

Personal Reflection:

Saturday, March 7, 2020

Submitted by: Deacon Steve Menaldino

Scripture: Psalm 121 & 127:1-2

Today's Devotion: Oh what a blessed release. We can be busy about our lives' work without "thought". When we realize that as Christians we build nothing of true value apart from what the Lord builds and watches over, we are set free. This does not give us the freedom to not work, but to "work". Work without fear. Work without looking over our shoulder. Day or night, here or there it matters not. God is always there.

Prayer: Dear Lord, we ask that you bless all of our work. We ask that you make our work productive for your purposes. Help us to be mindful of you as we labor. Amen

Personal Reflection:

Sunday, March 8, 2020

Scripture Readings:

- Genesis 12:1-4a
- Psalm 121
- Romans 4:1-5, 13-17
- John 3: 1-17

Reflections on today's sermon or readings:

Monday, March 9, 2020

Submitted by: Elder Tom Palmer

Scripture: Hebrews 3:1-6 (From The Message)

So, my dear Christian friends, companions in following this call to the heights, take a good hard look at Jesus. He's the centerpiece of everything we believe, faithful in everything God gave him to do. Moses was also faithful, but Jesus gets far more honor. A builder is more valuable than a building any day. Every house has a builder, but the Builder behind them all is God. Moses did a good job in God's house, but it was all servant work, getting things ready for what was to come. Christ, as Son, is in charge of the house. Now if we can only keep a firm grip on this bold confidence, we're the house!

Today's Devotion: The last line of this verse from The Message really caught my attention. All the lines from this verse are easy to understand. However, it is that 'firm grip' in the last line that I often forget as I proceed in my daily life. All too often I get caught up in matters where that grip loosens, where I'm trying to be the builder and not the building. It clouds my thoughts until I remember who the builder really is and when I do remember, without any effort, my grip tightens and my faith in My Lord Jesus Christ prevails and guides.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for all that you have given to your people, most importantly your Son, Jesus Christ. I ask that as I go through my daily life that my words and deeds reflect Jesus as the builder and me as the building. I pray that the grace, peace, and love of Our Lord Jesus Christ may shine through me to others so that they may know You as I do. May all that I do be to Your glory and honor and I humbly ask Your forgiveness when my human weaknesses causes me to veer from that purpose.

Personal Reflection:

Tuesday, March 10, 2020

Submitted by: Elder Connie Hughes

Scripture: Psalm 128

Today's Devotion: Psalm 128 is a “song of ascents.” It was sung by pilgrims on their annual visits to Jerusalem. It begins with “Blessed are all who fear the Lord, who walk in His ways.”

What does it mean to “fear the Lord?” The Lord opposes the proud – those who rely on their own resources to work out their future. The humble, the poor and needy, those who acknowledge their dependence on the Lord in all things, these are the ones in whom God delights. Thus the “fear of the Lord” is humble trust in and obedience to the Lord. Blessings come as a result of that obedience.

And how do we “walk in His ways?” The Holy Spirit’s role is to guide us step-by-step to do the Lord’s will. Walking closely with the Lord each day guarantees that we will be exactly where He wants us to be. The disciples never had to ask Jesus where they should go next. They just looked where Jesus was going and then stayed close to Him. Too often, we look for a road map directing us toward our future rather than a relationship with the One who is “the way.”

Do you fear the Lord? Are you walking in his ways? If so, the Psalmist promises a happy, meaningful, and blessed life – one surrounded by a solid family, strong children, and a future where you live to see your children’s children. (v.6) When you walk in fellowship with God, you do not have to ask Him to bless you. He wants to bless you.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank you for loving us. And we thank you for your many blessings. We know that you delight in giving us all good things. Today we ask for the Holy Spirit to be with us and show us how to walk and live in “Your ways,” not our own. We ask these things in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Personal Reflection:

Wednesday, March 11, 2020

Submitted by: Deacon Renee Erickson

Scripture: Ezekiel 36:22-32

Today's Devotion: Because of their sin of idolatry, the Israelites have been punished by being exiled from their homeland. Through Ezekiel, God is promising to bring them back to their land and prosper them physically and spiritually. They should make no mistake, though, that this return is any kind of a reward for good behavior on their part. On the contrary, "Thus says the LORD GOD: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name."

What blessed things the LORD GOD will do for His people for the sake of His Holy Name. They will be returned to their land; the land will produce abundantly; they will be sprinkled with clean water and cleansed from all their uncleanness; they will be renewed from within by receiving a new heart and a new spirit, God's spirit that will "cause you to walk in my statutes."

Are these not the same promises reserved for us in Christ's kingdom – cleansing of our sin by the blood of Jesus Christ symbolized in our baptism, God's own Holy Spirit within us to guide us into His ways and empower us to walk in them, an eternal home in heaven with God Himself? How quickly can we forget that all these benefits are only about God's goodness and not about ours. Recently, I had a bout of regret about some past failures. The LORD spoke a poem to me:

So you don't want to be a sinner saved by grace?
You'd rather be someone who has earned her place.
That's impossible, Child.

Prayer: To God be the glory. Great things He, and only He, has done .

Personal Reflection:

Thursday, March 12, 2020

Submitted by: Elder Janis Richards

Scripture: Psalm 95

Today's Devotion: The word, BIBLE, used as an acronym, can be a helpful reminder to all of us that God is our Shepherd and we are the flock under His care. "B" stands for "Basic". God invites us to use what we all have, our voices and hearts, to come into His presence. "I" stands for "Instructions". How do we come into His presence? Joyfully and enthusiastically, singing and shouting praises to the LORD. "B" stands for "Before". Why should we take time to worship God? Because even before creating human beings, God made the earth, the mountains, and the seas and is worthy to be praised. The psalmist calls Him "the Rock of our salvation", "the great God", "the great King above all gods", and the LORD our Maker".

"L" stands for "Leaving". The psalmist cautions us to remember what happened to the disobedient, grumbling Israelites who were left to wander in the wilderness for forty years. We are not to harden our hearts when we hear the voice of the LORD. Finally, "E" stands for "Earth". The people, rescued by God from the Egyptians and sustained with manna, quail, and water in the desert, refused to put their faith and trust in Him. They left the earth without entering Canaan, the place of rest that God had promised His people.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help us to heed the Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth that you provide for us in the BIBLE. Quiet all of the voices that we hear each day so that we can clearly hear and obey Your voice above all others. Please accept our songs of thanksgiving that we offer with the voices you've given us. AMEN.

Personal Reflection:

Friday, March 13, 2020

Submitted by: Deacon Susan Howe-Consiglio

Scripture: Exodus 16:9-21

Today's Devotion: In Exodus 16 God sends bread or manna from heaven to feed the Israelites in the wilderness.

The Lord provides enough food for all, and instructs the Israelites to not keep any of the food until morning. When some do, they awake to spoiled food. Each day food is provided, yet they cannot keep it for the next day. The food stayed fresh on the Sabbath, so the people did not have to gather food on the day of rest. God provided and God provides for us now.

Where do you go when you are hungry and tired? When you recognize a need in your life, do you grumble or turn to the Lord in thankful prayer? People need to trust in God. The choice is yours.

Prayer: Lord, help us to turn to you when we are hungry and in need. Please help us to trust in you and know that you will provide. Amen.

Personal Reflection:

Saturday, March 14, 2020

Submitted by: Carrie Biermann, Director of Children's & Family Ministries

Scripture: Psalm 95 (NIV)

Today's Devotion: Oh, good! A song of praise! Lent is often so depressing, all the repentance and wilderness and such... I'm so glad we get to rejoice for a bit by reading Psalm 95! It's calling us to worship the Lord with music and song, bowing and kneeling in worship, grateful that we are the people of his pasture, the sheep under his care! And what a great way to finish a psalm of praise, with reminders of... how we hardened our hearts against his voice... um... and tested the Lord... in the wilderness..... oh. Huh.

“Do not harden your hearts as you did at Meribah, as you did that day at Massah in the wilderness, where your ancestors tested me; they tried me, though they had seen what I did.”

A big part of Israel's life, from Scripture to the very rituals and worship they celebrate, is to recall and remember what the Lord has done for them in the past, as a basis of rejoicing in their trust in God's provision and blessing for the future. But they weren't perfect, and often forgot – even soon after amazing, life-changing, history-redirecting miracles like the Exodus, the Red Sea, and manna in the desert. Israel forgot what God had done, and tested God's provision, questioning God's intention and trustworthiness in the midst of the wilderness, despite everything God has done to protect, preserve, and bless them. And honestly, don't we? How often we fall into the functional and spiritual equivalent of asking God, “well, what have you done for me lately?” and forget the massive, life-changing, history-redirecting ways God has already acted in our lives to protect, preserve, and bless us. In Lent, we enter into the wilderness of Israel, with Christ as our leader, savior, and guide. As we walk with the Lord in his paths, let us remember – God HAS done amazing things for us, God is DOING amazing things for us, and God WILL do amazing things for us. We shouldn't forget, and test him. Instead, we should read Psalm 95, and while we acknowledge the end of it, we should revisit the beginning of it, and once again come before the Lord with thanksgiving. We may be in the wilderness sometimes, but we're never there alone. Christ is with us, and God has, does, and will continue to bless us in all things. We have seen what God has done, and we hold firm to that.

Prayer: Dearest Lord, thank you for your powerful intervention in our lives. You are mighty to save, in all times and places. Protect, preserve, and bless us – but also, we ask that you help us to always remember – you are the same yesterday, today, and forever. As you have upheld us in the past, we trust that you will do so whenever we rely on you. Help us to not forget your goodness, but instead to open our hearts to your will and leading in our lives. We thank you and praise you, O Lord. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Monday, March 16, 2020

Submitted by: Elder Jeannie Menaldino

Scripture: Psalm 81

Today's Devotion: Psalm 81 begins as a joyous song then with verse 6 the tone changes. The first part of the psalm (verses 1 - 5) is a call to sing joyfully in celebration of what God has done for Israel. The Israelites actually are participating in an annual festival decreed as a reminder of God's deliverance. It is to be done with many musical instruments and much singing. But beginning in verse 6 the rest of the psalm is a warning.

The Lord reminds his people how good He is to them and how He listens when they call in distress. Then the warning comes. Three times he implies they do not "listen to him". Israel wanted it both ways; they wanted the blessings and the protection, but they also wanted to do 'their own thing'. This is serious because he warns them if they don't submit to him and follow his ways he will leave them alone, to do their own thing. He will withdraw.

To listen is active. Definitions and synonyms include: to pay attention, to give consideration, heed, obey, focus.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for listening to me when I pray. I want to always have open ears to hear your voice and follow you, to read your word and obey you. Help me be a better listener.

Personal Reflection:

Tuesday, March 17, 2020

Scripture: Genesis 29:1-14

Lectio Divina (“Divine Reading”) is a traditional Benedictine practice of scriptural reading, meditation and prayer intended to promote communion with God and to increase the knowledge of God’s word. It does not treat scripture as texts to be studied, but as the living word.

Follow the four steps:

1. Read the scripture
2. Meditate on the meaning of the scripture
3. Pray for God’s word to be revealed to you
4. Contemplate the Word of God and what message He might have for you.

Personal Reflection:

Wednesday, March 18, 2020

You are a disciple of Christ. Relying on the Holy Spirit, you are responsible to live out Christ's teachings in the world.

Scripture: John 7:17-31, 37-39

Discipleship Exercise: Think about who Jesus is to you - is he the savior, Messiah, a prophet, a nice guy, one option of many, or something else? Honestly respond to this question Jesus posed to Peter: WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM? What questions do you have for Him about who He is?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Son and Holy Spirit, reveal to me who you really are. Help me to have clarity, a desire to know you more deeply, and to walk more closely with you every day. Amen.

Personal Reflection:

Thursday, March 19, 2020

Submitted by: Elder Steve Buxton

Scripture: Ephesians 4:25-32

Today's Devotion: Other than our theological beliefs, the one attribute which should separate us, as Christians, from the rest of the culture is forgiveness. So often we see accounts of horrific crimes committed on the news. Sometimes when the victim or the victim's family is interviewed, they will say something like, "because I am a Christian, I forgive" when speaking of the perpetrator.

A recent example was the off-duty female police officer in Dallas who mistakenly walked into the wrong apartment, then shot and killed a man in his own apartment thinking he was an intruder. She was convicted of manslaughter, and during sentencing the man's brother took the stand; he told the judge and those in attendance that he forgave her, didn't even want her to serve jail time, and that the one thing he and his deceased brother would tell her is to give her life to Christ!

Much of the media, and others in the country were astounded at that. We as Christians shouldn't be!

Remember the horrific events in Nickels Mine, Pennsylvania! A man went into a school in Amish country, and ended up killing a bunch of young girls then himself. Afterwards, the community told the world they forgave him, and embraced the perpetrator's family to comfort them!

Last autumn we read the book, Enemies of the Heart. One of the primary "enemies" we studied was unforgiveness. We are commanded to forgive for two reasons, (1) to offer grace to the other person and assist in their dealing with guilt, and (2) to help us avoid the bondage that bitterness will result in.

So, we should take to heart the last two verses in the passage above: Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. 32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, bring to my mind any bitterness I am harboring. Reveal to me anyone I have failed to truly forgive, and empower me to forgive them as You have forgiven me! In the powerful name of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ I pray. Amen.

Personal Reflection:

Friday, March 20, 2020

Submitted by: Deacon, Bill DeSio

Scripture: Psalm 23

Today's Devotion: Being brought up in a Christian family and going to Sunday School I remember the 23rd Psalm. In fact, I had to memorize the verse as a pre-teen and it was part of the studies we had before I became a member of our church. But looking deeper in the meaning of this Psalm, God is like a shepherd, leading his flock, protecting us from evil, gently/firmly proding us when we step out of line, deviating from the way of living set down in the Bible.

He has provided us all our needs: health, money, friends, family, respect, love and all else. Yet, at times we all want more of these things during our lives, sometimes controlled by "wanting" all the time. Be thankful for the abundant life you have been given. "My cup runneth over" – God has given us even more than we need or can use. Give thanks to God for what we have and share with those in need.

Prayer: God, we are so thankful for what you have given us and are reminded to help those who are less fortunate. Lead us in your way of righteousness with paths that are wholesome and full of integrity. We will fear no evil, for you are with us, keeping us safe. In your name, we pray. Amen.

Personal Reflection:

Saturday, March 21, 2020

Submitted by: Elder Chad Sanford

Scripture: John 1:1-9

Today's Devotion: Whenever I read this passage (and really, all of Chapter 1), I can't help but think of the opening song from Godspell with John blowing the shofar and singing, "Prepare ye, the way of the Lord." Lent is a time of reflection and preparation, but it is also a time of great anticipation. For me, this song is the spirit of Lent. John is telling us with great excitement and joy that the true light is coming to the world.

It is hard sometimes to find joy, especially this time of year, with gray skies and long nights. But already the days are getting longer and light is filling the world. "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it." We have to remember that God is always there for us, even in what seems to be the darkest places. He walks with us in our greatest triumphs and our deepest sorrows. His light never leaves us and He gave us His only son, Jesus, a symbol of that light, to remind us when we are most scared.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for giving us Your Son, Jesus Christ, to be the true light of the world. Often times, we get wrapped up in our own lives and forget that without His sacrifice, none of this life is possible. Most of all, thank you for still loving us when we do forget. Amen .

Personal Reflection:

Monday, March 23, 2020

Submitted by: Deacon Brian McLaughlin

Scripture: Acts 9:1-20

Today's Devotion: In this passage, Saul is on his way to Damascus, to hunt down members of "the Way", the early Christians, when he is struck down, knocked to the ground, and blinded by God as a giant reset in his life. Saul ultimately becomes "Paul", one of the greatest missionaries and preachers of the early Christian church, leaving behind a body of written work that encompasses about half of the New Testament.

Up until his conversion, Saul believed he was doing the right thing. He was single-minded in his mission. Then God re-educated him, and redirected him.

Another key figure in this passage is Ananias. We often overlook him, but to me he is the true hero of this passage, because the Lord calls out to him and tells him to go to the currently blinded Saul and heal him. Ananias knows of Saul's reputation and is fearful but goes because God asked him to do so.

Both Saul and Ananias were redirected by God, to take a path that neither of them would have chosen on their own.

Often in our lives we are going down a path, single-minded, with what we believe are good intentions, but it might be in a direction that is contrary to what God would have chosen for us.

Sometimes life throws something at us that knocks us to the ground, and changes our direction.

When this happens, ask the Lord, "Where are you sending me?"

Prayer: Dear Lord, I ask that you use me for your purposes, and embolden me to rely on you and trust you. Amen .

Personal Reflection:

Tuesday, March 24, 2020

Scripture: Colossians 9:1-14

Lectio Divina (“Divine Reading”) is a traditional Benedictine practice of scriptural reading, meditation and prayer intended to promote communion with God and to increase the knowledge of God’s word. It does not treat scripture as texts to be studied, but as the living word.

Follow the four steps:

1. Read the scripture
2. Meditate on the meaning of the scripture
3. Pray for God’s word to be revealed to you
4. Contemplate the Word of God and what message He might have for you.

Personal Reflection:

Wednesday, March 25, 2020

Submitted by: Elder Derek Donegan

Scripture: Matthew 9:27-34

Today's Devotion: "Do you believe I am able to do this?" This is a very poignant and directed question that Jesus asks the two blind men. We often experience hardships (similar to the men's blindness) throughout the journey of our life. I am sure we can all imagine different times when we have responded more positively or negatively to these hardships. When I look back on struggles of my life (both big and small), I realize that how I responded to these times directly relates to how I was answering the question Jesus poses in my own heart. As I reflect on this scripture passage, I admire the blind men's fortitude to truly believe regardless of their current state. This belief or "blind faith" allows them to be healed by Jesus. Similarly, during our times of struggles, if we ask Jesus for help and we believe that He is "able to do this", we open the door and invite him in to heal us and meet us where we are at that moment. The more we are able to ask Jesus and say yes to his question, the more our eyes will be open to see the opportunity to work in the world around us and to allow Him to work in us and through us.

Prayer: Dear God, please allow me to answer yes in my heart so that my blindness will be lifted to allow You to be in me, work through me, and walk with me throughout this day and everyday going forward. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Personal Reflection:

Thursday, March 26, 2020

Submitted by: Sebastian Carpenter, Director of Youth Ministries

Scripture: Psalm 130 - Who Can Stand?

Today's Devotion: There is beauty in the humble desperation of the psalmist's cry for help. There is also wisdom. "If you kept a record of wrongs Lord, who could stand?" (verse 3).

It is human nature for us to keep a record of wrongs. We use a variety of methods to prevent wounding in the future, especially if we are already vulnerable. For most of us, our relationship with the Lord bears the brunt of our self protecting behaviors. We get angry at God when things don't turn out the way we planned or wanted. We feel the negativity of the world that leads us to doubt God's power and goodness. We remember our wounding. We hold on to our sin. And in the moments where we can choose our path of healing, so often we close ourselves off from the power of the Holy Spirit.

Fortunately, the old saying "Fool me once, shame on you; Fool me twice shame on me," that some of us hold as truth isn't how God operates. The fullness of God's greatest gift to humankind, the death of our sin on the cross with Christ and the resurrection, gives us a clean record. Christ hung with our sin so we all may stand in glory with Him. In the Lord, there is forgiveness. There is redemption. There is unfailing love. But, it is through our own will and choice that God will meet us in this place. The psalmist's prayer comes from a place of wanting God's love and mercy, and willingness to serve.

Today, like the psalmist, take the opportunity to receive God's love and enter into the redemption that he offers you.. Reflect on your sin - the times you've turned away from God. Confess your sin to the Lord. Then, in that new space in your heart, offer more of yourself to the Lord. Accept God's love and mercy. Don't be a captive to what kept you down yesterday. Stand in the fullness of Christ, with Christ, today.

Prayer: Lord, I thank you that your ways are higher than my ways, and your thoughts are greater than my thoughts. I am especially grateful that you don't treat me as I ought to be treated, rather, you give me your grace, mercy and love. Help me to extend those gifts to others today, for your glory. Amen.

Personal Reflection:

Friday, March 27, 2020

Submitted by: Elder Jean Furey

Scripture: Psalm 130

Today's Devotion: Do you ever feel like you are on a roller coaster as we travel through this journey we call life? When we are cresting the tops of our highs, the peaks of our mountains, who do we call out to? When we are sinking into the very bottom of our barrels, the "depths" of our despairs, who do we call upon to hear our cries?

Psalm 130 reminds us to call upon the Lord. Sometimes when we scale those peaks we forget it is through the grace of God that we got there. Sometimes when we reach those lowest of lows, the deepest pit of sorrows, we may turn from God or feel like we are so far in the depths we are beyond His reach. But we are never beyond God's reach. "If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, who could stand?" God's forgiveness reaches into the deepest depths. His Light shines in the darkest corners.

Psalm 130 reminds us to wait upon the Lord expectantly. Wait with the confidence and assurance that God will hear our calls, forgive our sins, and lead us through our troubled waters. "More than watchmen wait for morning" we should be waiting in total trust that our God has already forgiven us and has plans to lead us through the ups and downs.

Psalm 130 reminds us to wait upon the Lord with hope. Whether we are rounding the top of the crest or clawing our way up from the depths of the valley, the companion on our quest should be hope. Hope for unfailing love. Hope for full redemption. God will hear our cries. Wait for his answer with hope.

Prayer: Dear Lord Father God, as we buckle up to ride on this adventure called life, help us to remember that wherever we are we invite You along. Help us to remember that You hear us in the tallest highs and the deepest lows. Help us to wait upon You with hope and assurance. Amen

Personal Reflection:

Saturday, March 28, 2020

Submitted by: Elder Don Naismith

Scripture: Matthew 18:1-7

Today's Devotion: Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Pretty hard one for us mature, educated, sophisticated adults full of wisdom. Perhaps we skip right over this one along with other scripture we don't like.

Jesus calls us to be humble like children. As a child, I probably wasn't the child Jesus had in mind. I did listen to my parents though and fully believed the scriptures that they read me. I fully believed the Easter story as it was read to me. I was humble and believing before the word of God. I did question why we call the day Christ was crucified, Good Friday. Apparently, the term Good Friday arrived sometime in the 12th Century and it isn't scriptural so I'm ok. As an adult, I work at maintaining and growing my faith. It involves church attendance and scripture study. Part of it requires being humble like a child. We must admit we need Christ as our shepherd. We don't have all the answers. Some things are "beyond all understanding" no matter how educated and enlightened we are.

Prayer: I pray that we are able to humble ourselves like little children. Give us faith and confidence so we can introduce You and Your Word to our little ones. Thank you for our church and the work that goes on in spreading your word. Amen.

Personal Reflection:

Sunday, March 29, 2020

Scripture Readings:

- Ezekiel 37:1-14
- Psalm 130
- Romans 8:6-11
- John 11: 1-45

Reflections on today's sermon or readings:

Monday, March 30, 2020

You are a disciple of Christ. Relying on the Holy Spirit, you are responsible to live out Christ's teachings in the world.

Scripture: Matthew 18:15-20

Discipleship Exercise: Did you know Jesus gives us step by step instructions on how to deal with conflict between believers? This passage tells us that if another sins against you, then:

1. Speak to him/her privately to let them know they've hurt you. They may not realize it. Keep it private to spare embarrassment and maximize the likelihood they will listen to you. If they listen, you've gained a brother/sister.
2. If that doesn't work, take 1-2 others with you. They should be neutral; the purpose is not to gang up on the person. They should care about both of you and be interested in reconciliation - choose carefully. Still keep it private.
3. If he/she still does not listen, bring it to the church - not as a broadcast, but to the leadership as authority that can mediate.
4. If he/she still won't listen, you can treat him as a tax collector or pagan. In other words, you have done all you can do and God won't hold it against you

Prayer: God, please help me to honestly try to work things out with one who has hurt me, and to resist any temptation to strike back, publicly humiliate, or talk behind their back. This is easy to say or read, but so hard to put into practice. Strengthen me to place relationship above retribution and reconciliation before revenge. Amen.

Personal Reflection:

Tuesday, March 31, 2020

Submitted by: Deacon Lynne McCone

Scripture: Ephesians 2:1-10

Today's Devotion: These verses represent the way the Apostle Paul wrote on the doctrine of salvation to the church in Ephesus. In the first three verses, he reminds the church of their former spiritual state prior to coming to faith in Christ, in which they were spiritually dead and unable to correct their sinful condition alone as is true of all humans from birth. He points out that no one is "born" a Christian and that every human being is a sinner, dead in their trespasses from birth.

Paul then explains why and how they were saved from this state of spiritual deadness. Because God was rich in mercy and had a great love for us, He acted to save us. God's reason for saving us was entirely His own. We did not merit His mercy, nor did we earn our salvation. In fact, because men do not naturally seek God, God must act first making us (spiritually) alive in Christ. The new spiritual life acquired in this way resulted in us being raised with Christ to be seated in heavenly places where we sit at the right hand of the Father in Christ. Thus, God appointed us to salvation so that He might display the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness to us so that in the ages to come we may glorify Him for it. Paul's message here is that we were saved by grace. Grace is unmerited favor, and as Paul has already explained, it answers the question "why" we were saved. The answer is God showed us unmerited favor.

Next, Paul connects grace to faith by saying that the grace of God was manifested by faith. What he means by this is that our faith was not the means by which we received grace. Instead, grace was the means by which we received faith. Faith is itself a gift of God and is not a result of our own efforts. The moment a person is born again and moves from the kingdom of darkness and enters into the light of the truth of the Gospel, they do so because God, by grace, has bestowed on us the gift of faith.

Finally, Paul says that God's work presupposes a purpose, and the purpose for His acting is so that we might do good works. Our good works will display the handiwork of God. They do not produce our salvation; they result from our salvation. Thus, faith implies devotion to the work God wishes to accomplish here on earth.

Prayer: Thank you, Lord, for bestowing your loving grace upon us so that in the faith that seals our devotion to you we might love one another and faithfully work in your name to bring your loving kindness to the world. Amen.

Personal Reflection:

Wednesday, April 1, 2020

Scripture: Psalm 143

Lectio Divina (“Divine Reading”) is a traditional Benedictine practice of scriptural reading, meditation and prayer intended to promote communion with God and to increase the knowledge of God’s word. It does not treat scripture as texts to be studied, but as the living word.

Follow the four steps:

1. Read the scripture
2. Meditate on the meaning of the scripture
3. Pray for God’s word to be revealed to you
4. Contemplate the Word of God and what message He might have for you.

Personal Reflection:

Thursday, April 2, 2020

Submitted by: Kate Meehan, Benevolence Committee

Scripture: Philippians 1:1-11

Today's Devotion: I know how Paul feels. Do you realize our church family at MPC is pretty special? I have often felt thankful to God for all of you and the blessings you have given me, my family, friends and strangers in the community. Serving without accolades or recognition, visiting shut ins, leading worship, sending cards, serving a meal, answering a call, providing hope, singing with beautiful voices, playing instruments, providing book bags and school supplies, making blankets, dresses, and prayer shawls, greeting the lonesome, building wheelchair ramps, doing odd jobs, getting Christmas gifts, listening, praying, fellowshiping. We do this year in and year out. We are in partnership in the gospel and He who began a good work in us will carry it on to completion. We do all of these things through the power of the Holy Spirit. And we do all of these things for the glory of God. Without these latter things, we would be just another social club or public welfare agency. But with them, these actions are of meaningful love. To this love, Paul adds the aspiration of increasing knowledge and depth of insight, so that we will grow to full righteousness (right-ness with God) through Jesus Christ. Along with our wonderful doing, let's set a goal to increase our knowledge of Jesus.

Prayer: Lord, we pray that you will bless all of the actions and activities of MPC and fill us with your love and knowledge and wisdom to discern what is right and good. Mold us to be like you. Amen.

Personal Reflection:

Friday, April 3, 2020

Submitted by: Deacon Jill Lardon

Scripture: Psalm 31:9-16

Today's Devotion: "Be merciful to me, O Lord, for I am in distress; my eyes grow weak with sorrow, my soul and my body with grief. My life is consumed by anguish and my years by groaning; my strength fails because of my affliction, and my bones grow weak. Because of all my enemies, I am the utter contempt of my neighbors; I am a dread to my friends -- those who see me on the street flee from me. I am forgotten by them as though I were dead; I have become like broken pottery. For I hear the slander of many; there is terror on every side; they conspire against me and plot to take my life. But I trust in you, O Lord; I say, "You are my God." My times are in your hands; deliver me from my enemies and from those who pursue me. Let your face shine on your servant; save me in your unflinching love.

David was in deep physical and emotional pain. His friends were talking behind his back, conspiring to kill him. Stress was making him sick and he was in total anguish. He cried out to God for help and asked for deliverance from the people who were trying to hurt him. David put all his trust in God because he knew that He was his refuge, his safe place.

Many of us can relate to David's despair when we encounter a traumatic event in our lives -- loss of a job, betrayal of a friend, divorce, illness, death. For seven years, I was deeply depressed and anxious. My body was in constant pain, I wasn't able to work and I was losing hope that I would ever get better. I knew that God and my family and friends loved me, but I couldn't "feel" it; the only thing I could feel was emptiness and fear.

Through this experience, I learned that it doesn't matter whether we feel it or not, God's love is always there. Even when things seem at their very worst, God is still there loving us every moment of the day and night. He sends help through friends, family and even strangers that pray for us, listen to us, encourage us and support us. Being aware of God's presence in all things, especially nature and animals helped me through this time. We can all find something to be thankful for and that can uplift our spirits

Prayer: Thank you, God, for listening to our concerns and for always loving us. Help us to trust in your word from Jeremiah 29:11, "For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

Personal Reflection:

Saturday, April 4, 2020

Submitted by: Rev. Jonathan Fettig

Scripture: Psalm 31:9-16; Lamentations 3:55-66; Mark 10:32-34

Today's Devotion: For quite some time, when presented with the option of studying or speaking about the gospel or a text like today's from Lamentations, I always chose the gospel. I think that it has been a combination of a desire to lean into the 'power of positive thinking' with a desire to avoid sadness and grief. Today I invite you to join me in leaning into lament. Not only are we in a season of repentance, but a large portion of scripture is devoted to grieving and lamenting.

I recently encountered the claim that ⅔ of the Psalms address or express grief. As I have examined them, I agree with that claim. So, my question was - how? How do I lament and grieve faithfully? Jesus says to ask and we will receive (Matt 7:7-8) and so I asked. I received an answer shortly thereafter. Andy Crouch, Swarthmore resident and former editor of Christianity Today, shared a tweet that I have been trying as an outline. I offer it to you in the hope that it helps you too:

"I'm still thinking about an amazing presentation by @praxislabs venture partner @dharrisindc last week about creating from lament. Effective change doesn't come from ignoring or skipping over lament — it begins there.

And then she gave us a template for lament from the psalms:

Cry out to God

Complain to God

Affirm trust in God

Petition God

Make additional arguments to God

Express rage to God

Promise obedience to God

State your assurance in God

I especially like "additional arguments." :)"

Warmly in Christ - Pastor Jonathan

Prayer: Abba father, I thank you that you listen to my crying, complaining, lamenting and arguing, yet you still love me and are willing to abide with me. You died for me. Help me to walk through this time closer to you. Amen.

Personal Reflection:

Monday, April 6, 2020

Submitted by: Stephen Cavicchia, Clerk of Session

Scripture: Isaiah 42:1-9

Today's Devotion: Isaiah is considered by many to be the greatest of the prophets of Israel. His name means "The Lord saves." Following Israel's golden period of growth and the building of the temple, it strayed from the covenant it had with the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. During this period, Israel is increasingly vulnerable to outside forces and falls to Babylon, the temple is destroyed and the nation placed in bondage. The defeat was total with a loss of political, social, economic and religious life. The Book of Isaiah reveals the full extent of God's consequent judgements on his people and his plan for their salvation.

This portion of scripture is quoted in part in Matthew 12:18-21. It foretells the coming of the Christ not as a conquering hero who reclaims the past glories of the nation of Israel, but as a humble servant. Chapters 42-53 contain four Servant Songs, two of which are contained within this portion of scripture.

The first song (42:1-4) calls "the Servant" to "bring justice to the nations" (42:1). As powerful as the Servant is "He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets . . . In faithfulness he will bring out justice." Why? Because "I will put my Spirit on him."

In our day and age it seems that those that get the greatest attention are those that shout the most and the loudest. Whether it be in our families, in our place of employment or in politics, the "loud" seem to attract the most attention.

Would that we could be like Elijah and be able to listen to God's "still small voice." Listening for God in our everyday walk and praying that His Spirit will rest on us will lead to not only a peace in our hearts, but the ability to challenge the many difficulties we face in life with confidence and a calm that only comes from Him.

Prayer: Lord, as we celebrate the resurrection of the Christ, we pray that your Spirit will dwell within us and grant us the ability to hear your small voice and live a life powered by your Holy Spirit in both word and deed.

Personal Reflection:

Tuesday, April 7, 2020

Scripture: John 12:20-36

12:20 Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks.

12:21 They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."

12:22 Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus.

12:23 Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

12:24 *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.*

12:25 Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

12:26 *Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.*

12:27 "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.

12:28 Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again."

12:29 The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him."

12:30 Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not for mine.

12:31 Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out.

12:32 And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."

12:33 He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

12:34 The crowd answered him, "We have heard from the law that the Messiah remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?"

12:35 Jesus said to them, "The light is with you for a little longer. Walk while you have the light, so that the darkness may not overtake you. If you walk in the darkness, you do not know where you are going.

12:36 While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become children of light." After Jesus had said this, he departed and hid from them.

Prayer: Lord, forgive our stubborn hearts, blind eyes and deaf ears. Help us to follow, obey, love and yield. It seems contrary to our human nature - it is divine nature. Make us more like you. Amen.

Personal Reflection:

Wednesday, April 8, 2020

You are a disciple of Christ. Relying on the Holy Spirit, you are responsible to live out Christ's teachings in the world.

Scripture: 1 Peter 3:8-16

Discipleship Exercise: What do you say if someone asks you why you have such a great attitude? Or, how you are able to endure hardships? Are you prepared with a response? While we don't want to appear scripted when we share about the Gospel, it is a good idea to have in mind what you might say so that you don't stand in stunned silence when asked. Make it a goal to prepare a response. Some direct sales companies train their salespeople to prepare an "I" story of how the product/service/company works for them, with the main instructions being to keep it brief, direct and to the point.

Prayer: Lord, I want to be prepared to speak of you whenever the opportunity arises. Help me to think quickly, focus, and relay the message that needs to be heard to spread your light in this needy world. Amen.

Personal Reflection:

Thursday, April 9, 2020

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Lectio Divina (“Divine Reading”) is a traditional Benedictine practice of scriptural reading, meditation and prayer intended to promote communion with God and to increase the knowledge of God’s word. It does not treat scripture as texts to be studied, but as the living word.

Follow the four steps:

1. Read the scripture
2. Meditate on the meaning of the scripture
3. Pray for God’s word to be revealed to you
4. Contemplate the Word of God and what message He might have for you.

Personal Reflection:

Friday, April 10, 2020

Submitted by: Deacon Jim Gatch

Scripture: John 18:1 - 19:42

Today's Devotion: Church family, this is one of the most gut-wrenching passages in scripture. Here we witness the sinless Savior of the world, about to endure the most gruesome acts mankind has ever endured. Jesus did nothing wrong to deserve such a punishment. He did it to save you and me from eternal punishment.

Crucifixion was often reserved to the most vial and lowliest of criminals. Those who were nailed to a cross were placed there as a warning and example to all those around them. It was a punishment that spoke to anyone who ever dared tried to commit any act that was like those who were being crucified had done. It was also the most painful and slow method of torture. Not only would you be experiencing pain from the nails being driven into your feet and hands, but you were propped up in a way in which your head and shoulders were hunched over which made breathing very difficult. In order to breathe you would be forced to lift your body upwards and with enough strength take a breath before your body fell back to its assumed position.

What lead up to this act was not just a conversation that accused Jesus of committing a supposed crime, but it involved Him being struck across the face, being beaten and flogged, stabbed on the head with a crown of thorns, being mocked in front of a huge crowd, being forced to carry his own cross after being physically beaten and having no strength to walk let alone drag a heavy cross that He was about to be crucified on.

Jesus endured the mocking, beatings, stabbings, nailing to the cross, and finally death, all because of His unfailing love for you and me. He committed the greatest act of love and grace because He did not want to see us endure judgment and wrath from God for our sin. This is what a true and loving Savior looks like and that's the mystery of death and the paradox of Good Friday. It means there is more to this day than death. The cross is not the end. It is Jesus' entry into and presence with us in the last place we ever wanted to be. So today we take our share in him that he might take his share in our hell. Today Jesus is on the cross, death is here, but not for long.....

Prayer: Heavenly Father, today I want to run away, I want to run away from Jesus' cross and death. I want to run away from my own death and those deaths of my family and friends. I know you understand what I'm feeling and I'm thankful that you will bring me through this most difficult circumstance. Thanks for Your promise of eternal Victory.... we give thanks in the name of your risen Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Saturday, April 11, 2020

Scripture: 1 Peter 4:1-8

Lectio Divina (“Divine Reading”) is a traditional Benedictine practice of scriptural reading, meditation and prayer intended to promote communion with God and to increase the knowledge of God’s word. It does not treat scripture as texts to be studied, but as the living word.

Follow the four steps:

1. Read the scripture
2. Meditate on the meaning of the scripture
3. Pray for God’s word to be revealed to you
4. Contemplate the Word of God and what message He might have for you.

Personal Reflection:

Rejoice!



CHRIST
IS RISEN

HAPPY RESURRECTION SUNDAY!