

Lenten Devotional Guide 2026



LENT

Otterbein United Methodist Church

Wednesday, February 18

[Luke 18:9-14](#)

When I was younger and growing up in the church, some of the scriptures, lessons, or bible stories that I remember the most were the parables. For some reason they just stuck for me. Reading this parable from Luke is definitely a familiar one. I find that I have related to the Pharisee in this parable saying, “thank you for not making me like that person, that evildoer, that tax collector.” Surely we have all at some point in our lives looked at another and said, “whew, thank goodness I am not like them!” How humble of us right? Well, I think it is so easy for us to get caught up in the business of life, work, and family that it gets hard for us to stay grounded in what matters the most. I am going to challenge myself this lent and onwards to ground myself in God, his word, and his love. For me this means staying humble and understanding that I am not even close to perfect, and showing others the love and grace that God gives to all of us. We are sinners, all of us! So why not take a moment and repent as the tax collector did, so we can go home justified before God. I will leave you with this thought: as we move through Lent and this season, it can be tough, but I often find it as the most rewarding season of faith for me. It is a time where I am more intentional, focused, and ready to serve. So maybe instead of giving something up, or in addition to, let’s add something to our lives that makes our faith stronger. Be humble, love your neighbors, repent, pray, read the scripture. We all have the tax collector in us, so let us remember “*all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all those who humble themselves will be exalted.*”

Prayer: *God, have mercy on me, a sinner. Help me to remember throughout this season of Lent, that I am but a servant for your will. I will love my neighbors as you have taught me. I will hold you in my heart as I move through this ever changing world. Thank you for loving me, caring for me, and blessing me. Amen.*

Kira Blagg

Thursday, February 19

[Philippians 3:12-21](#)

It pleased me to be assigned the Philippians scripture as one of my three choices for Lenten devotions because that is one of my favorite books in the Bible. For this reason, I decided to do a little research about it to refresh myself or possibly learn something new.

A few of my findings include the following: Philippians is considered an epistle or letter written by Paul, and Timothy is mentioned as co-author. Many scholars believe Philippians to be a combination of three or more fragments of letters composed while Paul was imprisoned. The Epistle contains loving encouragement to the “brothers and sisters” or believers at the church in Philippi.

This encouragement is still pertinent to us today. One verse that stands out for me is located in Chapter 4:8 and suggests that we think on things that are “pure and lovely,” etc. This verse has helped me many times. Another enlightening verse is 4:13: “*I can do all things through*

Christ who strengthens me." This verse was selected as a theme by a former Singles Sunday School class at Otterbein.

Our focus scripture encourages all believers to imitate Paul by continuing to press toward our "*prize of the heavenly call of God*," to be mature in our thinking, and to hold on to our faith. As I was revising this devotional, I was led to recall the hymn *Higher Ground* and discovered that it is "rooted in Philippians 3:13-14." The first verse and chorus are pasted below. The next time you feel discouraged, read a little in Philippians and sing or recite these uplifting lyrics:

*I'm pressing on the upward way,
New heights I'm gaining every day;
Still praying as I onward bound,
"Lord plant my feet on higher ground."*

Refrain:

*Lord, lift me up, and let me stand
By faith, on heaven's table land;
A higher plane than I have found,
Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.*

Source: <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/articles/history-of-hymns-higher-ground>

Judy Richardson

Friday, February 20

[John 17:9-19](#)

High Priestly Prayer

In his most difficult hour while awaiting his arrest Jesus prayed for his disciples, and he prayed to His Father for us. It is really very humbling to think that Jesus our LORD and SAVIOR prayed for us. He prayed for protection, sanctification, unity, and joy while we do the work we have been called to do.

We read that Jesus prayed that God would protect us by the power of His holy name. He prayed for protection against the evil one. Jesus knows what we face, for he has faced all our temptations. Thank you, LORD. He prayed for unity for his disciples and for us so that we may be one, as the Son and Father are one. Jesus prayed for our spiritual maturity through the word, that we might be reminded that HIS word is truth. Jesus prayed, "*As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.*" He prayed for his disciples and for us as we carry out our mission. Lastly, Jesus prayed that we might experience the same joy he has. Jesus Christ is our High Priest sitting at the right hand of God advocating for us. Believers, we can also experience that same joy for Jesus is praying for us.

Carolyn Green and daughter, Shelby Roberts

Saturday, February 21

[Philippians 4:10-20](#)

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Philippians 4:13

This is a familiar passage where Paul reflects on his life and credits his relationship with Christ for his strength and contentment. He says he has learned to be content whatever his circumstances. He knows what it is to have plenty, and he knows what it is to be in need. And Paul had higher highs and lower lows than most of us will ever have. In his time of plenty he had riches, power, intelligence, and he was highly respected. In his lows he was imprisoned, shipwrecked, beaten, faced hunger, and was in pain.

Paul learned the secret of being content. It was in his relationship with Jesus. Instead of seeking happiness in money or comfortable situations, he found his joy and contentment in Christ.

This is very comforting to me. Being content means that regardless of my circumstances, my possessions, or my status, I know that I am a child of God who loves me and will meet my needs now and forever.

That will enable me to endure any circumstance, not measure my worth by my possessions or physical condition, and not live my life based on what someone else tells me I should have or who I should be.

Let us all trust that God will provide exactly what we need at the right time. We will all face peaks and valleys in our lives, great happiness as well as sorrow, but if we have the joy that only God can provide, he will give us the strength to get through all of life's situations.

Prayer: *Lord, teach me the secret of joy and contentment in every situation. Strengthen me to rely on You when I have little and to remain humble when I have much. Amen.*

Linda Jordan

Sunday, February 22

[Daniel 9:3-10](#)

The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against Him.

Daniel 9:9

Daniel was of a royal Israelite family taken captive when the Kingdom of Judah fell to the Babylonians. They were forced into serving the various kings during the exile. The Israelites retreated from their faith heritage during their captivity and became a nation of idolaters. Daniel became a trusted advisor to king Darius and was very resented by others serving the king.

Daniel knew from Jeremiah's prophecies that the 70-year captivity was nearing an end and he feared it would continue because the people had turned from God. Even though God had sent other prophets to warn them of their unrighteousness for years, the people had ignored them.

Daniel was very righteous and turned to the Lord in prayer, pleading and begging, in fasting and in rituals. He confessed his own sins while praying for the nation, admitting he had not

followed God's commands and rebelled against God's covenant with them. Daniel confessed his sinfulness and need for God's forgiveness. Instead of blaming the nation of idolaters for their captivity, he looked at himself and spoke openly to God, accepting responsibility and earnestly seeking God's forgiveness and will for himself and his nation.

Prayerful self-examination is very difficult; it is often very hard to hear the answers we receive. God still speaks to us through prayer, the Bible, preachers, teachers, and concerned friends. Sometimes the truth is hard to take. But we must examine, evaluate and listen. If not, maybe we are rebelling against God's will for us and refusing to change.

Lent is a time of prayer, fasting, repentance, and renewal commemorating Christ's fasting in the wilderness to prepare for his public ministry and sacrifice.

What better time to self-examine ourselves and remember that "*the Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against Him*"?

Prayer: *Thank you Jesus for your unfailing mercy and forgiveness, no matter how often we rebel against you. We praise you for your renewing love and care. Amen.*

Mike Earman

Monday, February 23

[1 Corinthians 1:1-19](#)

*I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,
that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you,
but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought.*

1 Corinthians 1:10

Paul is writing this letter to the Corinthians to address some wrong attitudes and behaviors among them that he has heard about. Paul makes it clear that he is convinced the faith of the Corinthians is genuine as is confirmed by the gifts they have received from God. He addresses the division that has happened within the church. They were following leaders and teachers of their preference instead of Christ.

Lent gives us the opportunity of self-examination. Like the Corinthians, we may be divided in the church, or from the church. We must look into these differences and remember that we were baptized in the name of Jesus and our focus should be on Christ, not our opinions, traditions, teachers, or whatever else may be causing division.

Paul points us back to the cross which exposes our weaknesses and God's power, our sin, and God's grace. During Lent, we are called to let go of what separates us and return to what unites us, Jesus Christ crucified. As we journey toward the cross this season, we may ask ourselves what habits, loyalties, or assumptions may be dividing your heart and causing you to be distanced from others and most importantly, Jesus Christ.

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, draw us back to the cross. Strip away our pride and divisions. Unite us in your grace and teach us to live as people called by you. Amen.*

Kathy Billhimer

Tuesday, February 24

[Genesis 37:12-24](#)

HERE COMES THE DREAMER.

Genesis 37:19

I blurted out, "Why can't we be more creative?" I was told, nicely enough, that I was being naive and a little simplistic and maybe I was. But we can dream!

Joseph was a dreamer bringing dreams from God to earth, tying them together. Joseph was betrayed and sold into slavery and put in jail. Dreams have pitfalls. You may be called naive and simplistic. Many have suffered death for their dreams.

Jesus dreamed a dream of human redemption linking God and man together forever. He paid with his earthly life. Yet God the Father dreamed a resurrection.

What better time to become a dreamer than Lent. A time to dream of the sacred truth of God's love for all humanity. A time to dream of how to make light out of darkness, hope out of despair. To live a resurrection faith. So be a dreamer! Let the power of your imagination and the power of hope be a beacon for all of us. Let your dreaming give you purpose and the resurrection give you hope.

"Hold fast to dreams, for if dreams die, life is a broken winged bird that cannot fly."
(Langston Hughes) Let us live so they will say, Here come the dreamers.

Brenda Smith

Wednesday, February 25

[Genesis 37:25-36](#)

Then Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and not lay our hands on him, for he is our brother, our own flesh." and his brothers agreed.

Genesis 37:26-27

The brothers of Joseph were hovering on committing fratricide in Genesis 37:20, but Jacob's oldest son, Reuben, reasoned with them not to take his life. Instead, they would throw him into a pit and, unknown to the other brothers, Reuben planned to rescue him later. Their dislike of Joseph was due to the favoritism shown to Joseph by their shared father. While Joseph was Jacob's eleventh son, he was the first son of Jacob and his favorite wife Rachel. The couple had waited so long for a child and then Rachel died in childbirth with Joseph's younger brother Benjamin. Joseph's behavior did not help his position with his brothers. He did not incorporate wise speech and discernment. When he was out tending flocks with his brothers, he would bring bad reports of them to his father. As we know, Jacob had a special robe made for Joseph. God gave Joseph dreams indicating he would rule over his brother and he shared them with his brothers. This only increased their jealousy and hatred towards Joseph. The dangers of parental favoritism leads to envy, ambition, and can lead to the breakdown of family bonds.

The brothers did not kill Joseph as he was their flesh and blood. However, they wanted him gone. Murder was replaced by coveting monetary payment to have Joseph taken away. Of course, this led to the brothers' willful deception of their father that their brother had probably been killed by a wild beast. They assumed that with Joseph gone, their father would be more loving to them. However, Jacob would not be comforted by his other children and swore he would be in mourning for the rest of his life.

The deceit of the brothers was not a new theme in the life of Jacob. Jacob tricked his brother Esau into handing over his birthright for some bread and lentil stew. When Jacob and Esau's father was old and about to bestow his blessing on Esau before he died, their mother Rebekah and Jacob tricked Isaac into thinking he was talking to Esau and he bestowed his blessing on Jacob. The stories of deception flow through Jacob's life. At times he was deceived and at times he was the deceiver. There are also stories of favoritism from parent to child which resulted in the breakdown of family bonds.

This message of favoritism causing deceit, jealousy, and rage against others can be seen in life today. Whether it is by family members, educators, or those in positions of power, it can lead to a breakdown in the functioning of a group of society. During this season of Lent we need to ask ourselves if we are showing favoritism to a particular person or group and if that favoritism causes feelings of distress, loneliness, isolation, envy, or even rage for others. We need to be more inclusive of all our neighbors in our loving praise.

Mary Sue Wenger

Thursday, February 26

[Mark 2:1-12](#)

Jesus Forgives the Sins of the Paralytic and Heals Him

As I was deciding which of the 3 scriptures to choose to write about for my assigned date, this passage grabbed me because I thought of my own life.

I had rejected my rigid Calvinistic upbringing, which told me that those who were saved knew it, but had no free will to change their lives on earth when they were treated unjustly by others.

For over 30 years, I had been wandering in a spiritual wilderness. Although I didn't learn about God's prevenient grace until I became a United Methodist, when the time was right, God provided people who helped me get back to believing in the Lord and following him. And one of my friends, even though she was not a regular church goer, even sat in the pew with me for moral support on July 4, 1999, when I stood before the congregation of Aldersgate UMC in Alexandria, VA and took my vows by reprofession of faith.

That fall, I embarked on the 34-week Disciple 1 Bible Study. I had never read the Bible so intently! I read Mark's version of the healing of the paralytic during Week 20.

What did I learn? That it doesn't matter what the sin is, Jesus will forgive all sins when we repent of our sins and follow him. That's why, during the Ash Wednesday Service, United Methodist pastors use one or both of the following sentences during the imposition of ashes:

"Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return. Repent, and believe the gospel." (From page 323 of the *United Methodist Book of Worship*.)

The following are verses 2 and 3 of hymn #383, *This is a Day of New Beginnings*, in the United Methodist Hymnal:

*"For by the life and death of Jesus, God's mighty Spirit,
now as then, can make for us a world of difference, as faith and hope are born again.
Then let us, with the Spirit's daring, step from the past and leave behind our disappointment,
guilt, and grieving, seeking new paths, and sure to find."*

And this is my prayer: *Dear Lord, help me to always remember your gracious love to me and to reflect your love in all my interactions with others. In Jesus name, Amen.*

Susan Young

Friday, February 27

[Genesis 40:1-23](#)

Why do bad things happen to good people? Why wasn't my loved one healed? Why is this problem happening to me? These are some of the hard questions of Christianity. Joseph, the butler, and the baker were all in the Pharaoh's jail and it seemed like a bad thing. Yet the butler had a good ending, Joseph had no change, and the baker had a bad ending. Joseph said of their dreams "Interpretations belong to God" and ultimately their destinies also belonged to God!

Nearly 2 centuries later, Jesus lived a perfect, sinless life, yet he died on a cruel cross. Yet, look at all the good that came from that unjust substitutionary death including our salvation!

This world-changing event can be misunderstood. A missionary couple arrived in a village and told locals how Jesus died on the cross for the sins of the world. The next evening, they heard a commotion and found that a group had erected a cross in their front yard to scare them, discourage them, and cause them to leave. The couple rushed out and explained that they loved the cross - it was not a hated tool of execution, it was a means of showing the love of God so that people could go to heaven. The door was now open to present the gospel with much success!

As we use this Lenten Season to contemplate the life, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, let's remember that God is in control and we should yield the steering wheels of our lives to Him. Just as He ultimately did for Joseph in Egypt, He can make bad things end in good results. Say "thank you" to God for all the blessings you have and trust God to bring good results from your trials and tribulations! Don't forget to invite friends and relatives to church who may be searching and dreaming for answers during this Lenten Season.

Gary Edlind, Sr.

Saturday, February 28

[Mark 2:23-3:6](#)

Breaking the Rules

*Then Jesus asked them, "Which is lawful on the Sabbath:
to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?"*

But they remained silent.

Mark 3:4

In this passage from Mark, Jesus breaks some of the rules of the world and Jewish tradition. He grew up under these rules, so he knew them well. The Sabbath has a lot of rules surrounding it, particularly about work, and how we are to keep it holy as a day of rest.

But work also has a lot of meanings. Most commonly, we think of it as the idea of physical or mental labor in order to complete a task. There is also the theological meaning of good or moral deeds. And the Bible has a lot to say about the importance of works as part of our faith. Jesus healed a person on the Sabbath, completing a theological sort of work, while breaking the human rule about work meaning not resting.

Some rules have obvious reasons for existing and shouldn't be broken. Rules created for safety, rules we learn from when we are children—don't run with scissors, don't touch the hot stove; rules we live by as adults—stay off the roads if possible when there is a major winter storm, obey the speed limit.

Hmm...some of those rules might be broken. I was born, for example, in a huge winter snowstorm. My mother tells the story of how she thought she was going to have to tie a rope to my father and send him to the neighbor for help as she went into labor. We lived in Garrett County, Maryland, and the hospital was down the mountain. My father was able to follow a snowplow in his 4-wheel drive Ford to get my mother safely to the hospital so I could be born there with help of doctors and nurses, rather than in the living room. Safety rules were broken.

It makes me think back to WWII stories of people breaking rules to keep others safe, like people who were secretly looking out for Jewish neighbors in any ways that they could. The rules said they were not to help these people, and the world was trying to dehumanize them. But there were people who ignored these rules. My mind wants to believe there are rulebreakers like that still in our world.

So, go into the world and do good works, even on the Sabbath. Take a look at the rules and cause good trouble.

Maryann Wolfe

Sunday, March 1

[Genesis 41:14-45](#)

This scripture tells the story of how Joseph the slave becomes Pharaoh's honored and most powerful subject in Egypt. It tells how God's presence led Joseph to what God's ultimate plan was for his life.

Although not in the above text, it would be good to review how Joseph was able to rise above his station. We know God found favor with Joseph at an early age. God gave Joseph the power to interpret dreams. This led to his jealous brothers selling him into slavery. God was present with Joseph during his time as a slave. Even Potiphar, his slave master, was aware of God's presence in Joseph's life and gave him control of his entire estate. All was well until Joseph rejected the advances of the slave master's wife. In anger of Joseph's rejection, she falsely accused him of making advances to her. This angered Potiphar and he threw Joseph back into prison. God remained with Joseph and again he excelled and was given duties managing other prisoners. One prisoner was the former chief cupholder of the Pharaoh. He came to Joseph asking if he could interpret his dream. According to Joseph's interpretation of the cupholder's dream, the cupholder would be reinstated to his former position. Since he would be in close contact with Pharaoh, Joseph asks the cupholder to say a kind word to Pharaoh and perhaps that would help him to get out of prison. It took two years for that to happen.

This brings us to today's scripture. After finding no one who could give Pharaoh answers to the meaning of his dreams, the cupholder remembered Joseph's interpretation of his dream and his request. The cupholder told Pharaoh his story about Joseph. Joseph was brought to Pharaoh. Joseph interprets Pharaoh's dream and thus begins his ascent to freedom from prison and becoming Pharaoh's right hand man.

How can we apply this scripture to our own lives? Through all of Joseph's adversities his relationship with God continued. No human life is without trials. What hardships have you encountered in your life? A lost job, a devastating health issue, a disappointment in your mate or child? We've all experienced hardships, but with patience, a continued relationship with God, and knowing he is always with us in bad times, we can find comfort. God can make lemonade out of lemons if we stay in relationship with him during our trials. We should realize that God has a plan for each of us that will appear in God's time, not ours. We should remain steadfast in that knowledge, never losing hope!

Vicki Gaines

Monday, March 2

[Mark 3:7-19a](#)

This scripture passage recounts a pivotal moment in Jesus's ministry, highlighting His growing popularity and the gathering of his disciples. Here we see Jesus withdrawing with His followers to the sea while a great crowd follows him, drawn by the miracles He performed. This scene emphasizes the power of faith and the importance of community and following Christ.

The crowds represent the diverse groups seeking healing and hope, demonstrating that Jesus's message transcends boundaries. He calls His disciples to be with Him, signifying the intimate relationship He desires with those who follow Him. This not only illustrates the importance of being in close fellowship with Christ, but also underlines the calling to evangelize and reach out to others.

As we reflect on this passage, we can consider our own response to Jesus's call in our lives. Are we merely part of the crowd seeking what we can gain, or are we stepping forward to embrace discipleship? Jesus chose individuals from various backgrounds to be His disciples, highlighting that anyone can be a part of His mission.

Let us think about how we can respond to His invitation. This week, may we strive to spend time in communion with Him, seeking direction and understanding of our purpose. As we follow Him, may we also be encouraged to gather with fellow believers, sharing the good news and extending love to those around us. Through His guidance, our lives can reflect His light in the world.

Susan Pollard

Tuesday, March 3

[Genesis 49:1-17](#)

What We Carry Into the Light

Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you what shall happen to you in days to come.

Genesis 49:1

Genesis 49 is a moment of unfiltered truth. Jacob gathers his sons and speaks words that reveal who they have been, their strengths, their failures, their wounds, and the consequences of their choices. It is not sentimental. It is not softened. It is the kind of honesty that strips away illusion. Lent has a way of doing the same thing. It invites us into a space where God speaks truth over our lives, not to shame us, but to awaken us.

I've learned that honesty can be costly. When I've tried to open up to people I believed were close, the relationship sometimes shifts. Suddenly I'm no longer a companion but a complication. Someone whose story is too heavy, whose truth is too real. The connection stagnates, and I'm left wondering if being vulnerable and honest was a mistake. That quiet distancing leaves a mark.

In the world we live in, raw honesty is often treated like a threat. People pull back when the truth gets too real, too heavy, too unpolished. Vulnerability can make you a liability. But the Kingdom of God is nothing like that. In God's Kingdom, truth is not something to fear, it is the doorway to healing. God does not recoil from the parts of us others find overwhelming. He draws near, meeting our deepest wounds with compassion and restoration.

But nothing has forced deeper honesty in me than the experience of combat. To realize how fragile life is, seeing it leave a person right in front of you, along with all of the other sensory overloads that get repressed. It pierces something in your soul that can never be undone. In those

moments, everything you've ever done wrong is suddenly posted on the forefront of your thoughts, making a social media feed look like a 3rd grade power point by comparison. Every single careless word spoke in anger. Every selfish choice. Every person you took for granted because of your own self-centeredness. And there I am, wondering in that moment of clarity, does God intend to let me return from the battle space? You don't have to go to combat to understand this weight. But in those moments, all that one can do is pour that raw, unbearable emotion into a single plea for God's grace. It is the only space you will find peace.

Lent brings that same clarity, but without the battlefield. It calls us to face the truth about ourselves with courage, humility, and hope. Just as Jacob's sons had to hear who they were before they could become who God intended them to be, Lent invites us to stand before God honestly; trusting that truth is the doorway to transformation. Lent is not about punishment; it is about awakening. It is the season where God meets us in our truth so He can lead us into new life.

Prayer: *God of mercy and truth, meet us in the places we fear to face and in the places we would rather hide. Give us courage to hear Your voice, courage to confess what is broken, and hope to believe You can make us new. Lead us through this Lenten season into deeper honesty and deeper healing. Amen.*

Kevin Andrade

Wednesday, March 4

[Mark 4:1-20](#)

Parable of the Sower

In this scripture we are called to examine our own hearts and see what kind of soil we are standing on. How do we respond to God's message? Do we stand on hard soil, rocky soil, thorny soil, or good soil. Or, could we have stood on all of them during different times in our lives. As a young child, I probably stood more on the hard soil. I heard bits and pieces about God and Jesus through Sunday School and children's books. I thought I believed, but the words seemed to go in one ear and out the other. I didn't really understand how or why faith was important in my life.

As I grew up, I experienced rocky soil by starting to pay more attention in church, and I became more enthusiastic about God's work. How could it affect my life in school or home or out in the world? Could it make me a better person? It didn't take long for school work to become more important though, and thoughts of God were pushed aside. Then after we got married, we moved around so much that it became hard to take church life seriously. Packing boxes and finding new homes seemed to take priority and new houses needed decorating. Worship was being choked out of my life. We finally settled down, bought a house, and started worshiping regularly. I had finally found good soil and realized how important God and faith were in my life. My feet were firmly planted, and I grew spiritually with God in the center of my life.

Blessings to all,
Margaret Clark

Thursday, March 5

[Mark 4:21-34](#)

He used many such illustrations to teach the people as much as they were ready to understand.

Mark 4:33 (The Living Bible)

I like reading and rereading the many life lessons Jesus shared in His ministry. These verses are a particular favorite.

Life is a journey. There are people in our church just beginning, some youth, some young adults, some adults and lots of older adults. We can each read these verses and have a different thought of the meaning. I think that is ok. I think that is what Jesus is saying in verse 33 "*to teach the people as much as they were ready to understand.*" Different times in our lives we can read the same words and have a "new understanding." Each time we read Jesus's teachings it is important that we apply it to our lives and live it.

What better time than during the Lenten season to plant that mustard seed in our life, be in prayer, open to learning and growing. After all, what Jesus offers each of us is a personal relationship with Him. How comforting to have Him close as we reread and think about His life on earth.

When we get to Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, we remember times in our lives when we have lost loved ones and how He brought comfort through the Holy Spirit. That is the seed that continues to grow as we live - so shall He live.

Prayer: *Dear Heavenly Father, Your presence in our life reaches out to others and makes the world a better place. Amen.*

Anna Steele

Friday, March 6

[Mark 4:35-41](#)

Fear or Faith? Such is a question raised in this powerfully intriguing story.

The storm, beyond anything these professional fishermen have ever faced, leaves them terrified, filled with doubt, and abandonment. Violent wind and raging water have swept down on them. Jesus, the one in whom they have invested their very lives is asleep in the stern, head resting comfortably on a pillow, exhausted from the day's work, and seemingly without a care in the world. Those in the boat woke Jesus, and in their terror asked him, "*Do you even care that we are about to die?*"

Do you care Jesus, when we are overwhelmed by chaos? When we are powerless against the forces arrayed against us (or seemingly so), do you care, Jesus? Where is God in my distress? Is God really all powerful or maybe God is asleep?

Jesus, in our story, got up and rebuked (can we catch the power of the word) the wind. Be silent! Be still! The wind immediately ceased. The stars came out. The sea was as smooth as polished glass and it was a beautiful night to be out on the water. To those in the boat Jesus asks,

“Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith? So, which will it be, fear or faith? When the storms of life are ragin’ and they most certainly will, will it be fear or faith that guides your response?

There are two different worldviews offered in this story.

We can live by fear. Fear is a powerful weapon deftly wielded by those who seek to control and reign with terror. Fear is easy because it demonizes ‘those people,’ the ones who are not like me, and ‘they’ are the enemy. Fear is satanic.

OR

We can live and move and have our being in a world listening to the One who is God’s Living Word, Jesus, who gives us the promise that the Kingdom of God has come into our midst. Faith is God’s gift to us in and through Jesus the Messiah.

The story ends with those in the boat now in great awe asking themselves and us, “*Who then is this that even wind and sea (the powers of chaos) obey him?*” Their answer is to follow Jesus. They stumble and fail and get it wrong more often than not and still they follow. I believe that is the journey, more like a trek often along paths we would not otherwise choose, that we are called to as well. We are called and equipped to live by faith.

Jim Wingert

Saturday, March 7

[Mark 5:1-20](#)

The Madman

Mark 5:1-20 tells the story of a demon-possessed man living alone in a cemetery among the graves. Can you picture a sadder existence? He was called a madman because no one could restrain him or tame him. Many times he had been chained and tied up with ropes but he broke them every time in his deranged condition. In his isolation he roamed through the graves screaming and cutting himself with sharp stones. But when Jesus showed up with his disciples, this madman ran up to Him and bowed in worship.

Jesus asked the man his name and he replied, “My name is Mob. I’m a rioting mob.” He must have realized the power of the man he was talking to because he begged Jesus not to banish “them” from the country, I guess meaning him and the demons with him. So Jesus, seeing a herd of pigs nearby, ordered the demons to leave the man and enter the pigs which caused the pigs to stampede over a cliff into the sea and drown. Sadly, the pig owners were more concerned about the loss of their pigs than that the poor demon-possessed man had been healed. They ordered Jesus to leave and not come back.

As Jesus was leaving the area, the now formerly demon-possessed man begged to go with Him, the miracle worker who had drastically changed his life and restored his sanity. But Jesus told him to stay among his own people and tell them what the great had done for him. This is what he did – gave his testimony in the ten towns near him about how his life had been totally changed by Jesus. The Scripture doesn’t say, but I can imagine that many people, knowing the story of this man’s life, were brought to Jesus by his testimony.

That is also what we are called to do – tell people around us what Christ has done in our lives. I doubt that our stories would be as dramatic as this man's, but Jesus has blessed us all and we bless others as we share Good News.

Rosalie Bailey

Sunday, March 8

[Romans 8:1-10](#)

For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned the sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.

Romans 8:3-4

This passage, for me, is a short summary of what Jesus sacrificed for us on the cross. We like to think that our laws are powerful and will keep humankind from doing sinful things, but that thought is misguided. I am writing this during the aftermath of several highly publicized killings in an American city. It is not my place to figure out exactly what is going on there, but it certainly does not feel like watching individuals living according to the Spirit!

The teachings of Jesus in the Bible provide multiple examples of how we can live according to the Spirit - loving one's neighbor as oneself, caring for each other, accepting that we are ALL made in the image of Christ, are a few examples. We should all be striving to do these things, even while acknowledging that we are not perfect and are not without sin.

I see many people in my life who are trying to live according to the Spirit and be righteous. It makes me hopeful for the future of mankind and our country that most people in my life are caring, considerate individuals who really are trying to "live the good life." This does not mean material possessions as it often is used, but truly living by the Scriptures in their everyday interactions and activities.

I, as most sinful humans, do not always succeed in my efforts to live according to the Spirit. I have to work to control my temper at times and may not be the quickest to forgive what I perceive as slights. With the grace of God and the sacrifice made by Jesus Christ on the cross, I keep trying.

Prayer: *Dear God, help guide me in living a righteous life, to follow Jesus and respect his sacrifice on the cross on my behalf. Please continue to forgive me when my efforts fall short. Amen.*

Janet Gloeckner

Monday, March 9

[Genesis 44:18-34](#); [1 Corinthians 7:25-31](#); [Mark 5:21-43](#)

Thy Will Be Done Lord

All three Scripture passages provide us valuable considerations this Lenten season. In Mark 5 we have two individuals seeking Jesus' healings in two very different ways. Jairus, the prominent temple leader, falls clutching at Jesus' feet, begging desperately, loudly, even intrusively for his daughter's life. The nameless, shamed bleeding lady deemed so by religious laws comes silently sneaking a grab at the very fringe of his robe. Yet, both are granted their desired healings. In Genesis 44 Judah (one of the future twelve tribes), a sinner by his actions, pleads just as desperately for the life of his father through the spared life of a half-brother, even to the point of willing to be sacrificed, not even aware it's to the half-brother he so clearly wronged. All three plead to authority figures for the help only they can grant and all receive it. All three plead for innocent lives to be spared. Two nobly lay aside their own needs as Christ calls us, the other boldly claims the promises of her birthright as a child of God, quietly but confidently trusting in the promises of God as Christ also calls us. The sinner does not verbally own his wrongful behavior but his contrite heart is quite evident to the wronged party.

So does it matter how we bring our requests to Jesus? If a mere mortal man can see a changed heart, why do we obsess over proving over and over to God that we are sincerely sorry? Yes, Scripture calls us to confess our wrongs, but if things are all lip service and not shown in our demeanor, are these words sufficient?

In 1 Corinthians 7 Paul cautions us, echoing Jesus' teachings, to not get caught up in the world's or religion's definition of a successful life. Once again we are advised to ignore temporal matters, not letting anything or anyone come between us and Jesus. It's a harsh, but truthful point both make. Jesus is the only one who should have our attention, our whole-hearted devotion; without Him we cannot fully give ourselves to anyone else. Have we given up the right things this Lenten journey or just minor inconveniences? Are we willing for our priorities to be completely aligned or are we spending too much time serving and/or advocating instead of listening and studying His Word, just being with Him?

Prayer: *Heavenly Daddy, Children need loving, attentive parents and spouses need devoted partners as much as parents need obedient children and spouses need a cooperative conversation. Help us Father, to remember we are your children. Help us Jesus, our Bridegroom, to remember we are betrothed to You. May you receive Your desired time with us and may we honor You in our earthly relations however those have manifested. In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

Tara Eckenroad

Tuesday, March 10

[Mark 6:1-13](#)

This passage contains two of the stories of the gospel that (in my opinion) characterize Jesus' mission of spreading the word of God. The first story, *A Prophet Without Honor*, shows the rejection of Jesus by his own people, which is very similar to how the crucifixion was carried out. It also humanizes Jesus a lot, which gives us a perspective that we don't always think about. Often, we get into the habit of thinking of Jesus as an untouchable perfection, and that we can't hope to be nearly as good as he was, but that is far from the truth. Jesus was sent to us to be God among us, and to be fully holy and fully human. Jesus is fully rejected by the people he grew up with. "Isn't this the carpenter?" The people from his hometown don't see him as a prophet; they see him as the village boy, the carpenter, they think about his siblings who still live in their village. It must hurt to go home and not be accepted for what you are. Jesus must be frustrated that all he can do is to heal some people, because his own home won't accept him. I also see this story having similarities to our lives. When we reject Jesus in our own lives, even though we love him like family, it must be frustrating. Jesus is persistent though, and will keep working to bring us back to Him, no matter what.

The second story: *Jesus Sends Out the Twelve*, also exemplifies the whole purpose of Jesus' mission. He sends off his apostles in a similar way to the way they started their journey. They have nothing except what is completely necessary, and they are sent to drive out evil spirits from villages in the land. Jesus is spreading the word through his apostles in this story, and the word is spread, demons are driven out, and people are healed. In some ways, the twelve apostles were the very beginnings of Christianity. While Pentecost is the true 'birth of the church', there are many similarities to the way the apostles went out, and the way the church spread. While our church isn't wandering around the world with only the clothes on our back, there are some similarities to what we do now, and what the apostles did in Mark. Our many outreach missions, like the soup kitchen and clothes closet, are a modern twist on the apostles who "*anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.*" Of course, there is always more we can do as individuals. A kind message or letter may not drive out any demons, or heal sickness, but it can certainly show the recipient the love of God. There are many ways to spread the word of God, which was the ultimate goal of the apostles' mission, and Jesus' mission. It is all up to us as people to go out into the world and spread the love of God.

Micah Blagg

Wednesday, March 11

[1 Corinthians 8:1-13](#)

Forward to Holy Thursday's end of Lent, let's all move beyond idol food and get to Jesus' crucifixion. Only God determines a Messiah. Crucified Christ Jesus' resurrection is God's proof of Messiahship and Christians believe Christ sits in Heaven at the right-hand of God. Biblical Scholars write of "16 Messiahs that wanted-to-be." But only Christianity proclaims a resurrected Jewish Messiah; and in all the New Testament, only Paul gives his name to affirm his witnessing.

Key Pauline References:

- **1 Corinthians 9:1:** Paul defends his apostleship by asking, "Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?"
- **1 Corinthians 15:8:** Paul lists unnamed witnesses of this resurrection and states, "Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me"
- **Galatians 1:12, 15-16:** Paul claims his gospel came through a "revelation of Jesus Christ," stating that God was "pleased to reveal his Son to me"
- **2 Corinthians 12:1-7:** Paul mentions visions and revelations direct with the Lord, when ascended to the third heaven

Context in Acts:

- **Acts 9:3-6:** The Damascus Road experience where a light flashes and Paul speaks with a blinding light Jesus
- **Acts 9:27:** Barnabas confirms to the disciples that Paul "had seen the Lord on the road".
- **Acts 22:14-15:** Ananias tells Paul he was chosen to see "the Righteous One".
- **Acts 26:16:** Jesus appears to Paul, stating, "I have appeared to you for this purpose".

These experiences, described by Paul as direct revelations, were foundational to Paul's acceptance as The Apostle to the Gentiles by Jesus's succession Torah-based ministry, known as "The Poor," Ebionites. Long documented as based in the Jerusalem Temple and headed by Jesus' brother, James the Just.

In this Jerusalem Church, from which Paul taught the phrase "died for our sins" as probably an apologetic rationale for the death of Jesus as being part of God's plan and purpose. Paul "died for our sins" from scriptures **Isaiah 53:4-11**, and **4 Maccabees 6:28-29**. "Raised on the third day" came from **Hosea 6:1-2**. Paul taught sinful Gentiles these as a basis for their salvation, and apart from the Torah.

A Pauline Prayer: 2 Corinthians 13:14. *May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you. Amen.*

Joel Jordan

Thursday, March 12

[Genesis 46:1-7, 28-34](#), [1 Corinthians 9:1-15](#), [Mark 6:30-46](#)

Enough for the Journey

As we grow older, many of us learn to travel lighter. A smaller suitcase. Only the essentials. There's wisdom in knowing that carrying too much slows you down. Lent invites us into that practice of noticing what we are carrying and to trust that God provides enough for the journey.

In **Genesis 46**, Jacob sets out for Egypt late in life. He leaves behind familiar land and certainty, carrying only what he needs. God meets him in the night and says, *"Do not be afraid... I will go down with you."* Though Jacob's path is treacherous, he does not walk it alone; God is with him, and God's presence is enough.

In **1 Corinthians 9**, Paul speaks of laying aside his rights for the sake of the gospel. Though entitled to comfort and support, he chooses simplicity, so nothing will stand in the way of Christ's message. Faithfulness, Paul shows us, sometimes means letting go not out of loss, but out of love.

Then in **Mark 6**, the disciples are exhausted and overwhelmed when a hungry crowd appears. Jesus asks a simple question: *"What do you have?"* Five loaves. Two fish. Not much, but enough when placed in His hands. Jesus blesses it, breaks it, and feeds everyone. There is even food left over.

Together, these scriptures remind us that God does not always remove the struggle, the pain, the grief, but God provides what we need to continue moving forward.

This Lent, consider what you might gently release: fear, regret, or responsibilities from another season of life. Offer what you do have: prayer, kindness, and faith. Trust all of this to God who causes everything to work together for good (Romans 8:28).

Prayer: *Gracious God, when the road feels long and our strength feels small, remind us that You go with us. Teach us to trust that what we place in Your hands is enough for today. Amen.*

Dave & Donna Fickes

Friday, March 13

[Mark 6:47-56](#)

Do not be afraid. It is I.

Mark 6:50

So many times in our lives we see with our own eyes something spectacular that, at first glance, we cannot believe what we are seeing. We doubt our own senses and question what we have just that moment witnessed. We even have an expression for this phenomenon. "I can't believe my own eyes."

This was the case that confronted the disciples when they witnessed Jesus, in the middle of the lake, walking on the water toward their boat. They could not believe what they were seeing with their own eyes. They were terrified. It was only after Jesus calmed their fears that they realized what they saw was real.

Earlier that day the disciples witnessed the feeding of the 5,000, yet they still doubted that Jesus was the true Messiah. They still doubted their own senses. That night only the voice of Christ calmed the hearts of these fearful men.

Sometimes, even in the presence of miracles or unmistakable signs, our hearts remain clouded with uncertainty. We struggle to trust what we do not fully understand, letting fear and doubt overshadow the evidence before us. Yet, it is in these vulnerable moments that Jesus reaches out, reassuring us with His presence and His words: "Do not be afraid."

Our senses can betray, but our faith can sustain us through our doubts. We may not have seen Jesus walking on the water. We may not have been fed like the 5,000. We may not have seen the empty tomb or the nail scars in his hands, but we believe the words of Christ *"Do not be afraid. It is I."*

Ron Cartee

Saturday, March 14

[Mark 7:1-23](#)

Then he called the crowd again and said to them, "Listen to me, all of you, and understand: there is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile."

Mark 7:14-15

In today's reading, the Pharisees accuse Jesus and his disciples of not following the law closely enough. They point out that the disciples eat without washing their hands, which was a strict tradition among the Jews. But Jesus doesn't just defend his disciples—he turns the conversation around and tells the Pharisees that they are the ones missing the point.

The Pharisees were very strict about following the law, down to the smallest details. They made sure to obey every rule as they understood it. But here's the problem: they expected everyone else to do the same, and they looked down on those who didn't. They acted like they were better than others because they followed the rules so perfectly. In doing so, they used the law to feel superior, rather than to grow closer to God.

Jesus calls the Pharisees out for only giving the law lip service. They said they loved the law, but their actions and attitudes showed something different. They were more concerned with looking good on the outside than with what was going on inside their hearts. Jesus reminds them that all these rules and traditions are just external things. What matters most is what's happening in our hearts.

So let's talk about loving God with our hearts. It's easy to fall into the habit of going through the motions without really thinking about what we're doing. We might go to church every Sunday, but are we really paying attention? Are we just sitting there, or are we actively participating and trying to connect with God? It's easy to let our minds wander or think about what we're going to do after church instead of focusing on the prayers, the scripture, and communion.

The same thing can happen when we pray. Are we reflecting on what God wants us to do, or are we just trying to get through our daily prayers as quickly as possible? It's important to remember that the point of prayer is to bring us closer to God, not just to check it off our to-do list.

Another important thing to remember is not to look down on others who aren't practicing their faith the same way we are. It's easy to fall into the same trap as the Pharisees, thinking we're better than others because we follow the rules more closely or because we do certain things that they don't. But that's not what Jesus wants from us. He wants us to love others and encourage them as they try to grow in their faith. Walking the path of discipleship is difficult for all of us, and we're all at different places on that journey.

Instead of judging others, we can be examples of God's generous and loving heart. When we show kindness, patience, and understanding, we're helping others see what it really means to follow Jesus. That's usually much more helpful than pointing out where they're going wrong or making them feel bad for not being as "perfect" as we think we are.

In the end, what Jesus wants from us is a heart that's turned toward God, not just lips that say the right words. He wants us to live out the spirit of the law—to love God and others with

everything we have. When we do that, we're not just going through the motions; we're truly living our faith.

Prayer: *Heavenly Father, Thank You for guiding us today as we explored the importance of living out the spirit of the law. Help us to go beyond just saying the right words and instead fill our hearts with true love for You and for others. Give us the grace to follow Your commandments with sincerity and devotion. When we fall short, remind us of Your mercy and give us the strength to try again. May we always seek to honor You in our thoughts, words, and actions. We ask this through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.*

Linda Conrad

Sunday, March 15

[John 6:27-40](#)

In today's scripture passage, Jesus redirects the crowd's attention from physical hunger to spiritual necessity. Having just fed the five thousand, the people wanted more bread, but Jesus challenged them: "*Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life.*"

Lent is our season to audit our "work." We often exhaust ourselves laboring for things that perish—reputation, comfort, or temporary security. When the crowd asks what they must do to perform the works of God, Jesus offers a startlingly simple answer: "*The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.*" Our primary task is not a checklist of religious achievements, but rather a deepening trust in Christ.

Jesus declares, "*I am the bread of life.*" Bread, in the ancient world, was the most basic requirement for survival. By claiming this title, Jesus asserts that He is not a luxury for the pious, but a necessity for the soul. To come to Him is to never go hungry; to believe in Him is to never be thirsty.

During these forty days of Lent, we practice fasting to remind our bodies that "*man does not live by bread alone.*" As we feel the pangs of physical hunger or the absence of a habit we have given up, we are invited to redirect that longing toward the only One who truly satisfies. He is the gift from the Father who "*comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.*" In Him, nothing is lost, and everything is redeemed for the last day.

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, You are the Bread of Life. Forgive us for seeking satisfaction in things that spoil. This Lent, cultivate a hunger in us for Your presence. Teach us that the greatest work we can do is to rest in the gift of Your grace. Draw us closer to You, that we may live by the example of Your life. Amen.*

Bill Pollard

Monday, March 16

[Mark 7:24-37](#)

After feeding the 5,000, Jesus withdraws to the area north of Galilee to instruct his disciples, however his notoriety follows him. Near Tyre Jesus seeks refuge, but a Syrophenician woman hearing Jesus is there begs Jesus' help in driving a demon from her daughter. Near Sidon people bring a deaf and mute man for Jesus to heal.

Both of these events show Jesus ministering to Gentiles, non-Jews. Jesus drives the demon from the woman's child because of her humble persistent pleas and Jesus restores hearing and speech to the man who is brought to him.

Jesus demonstrates that his mission is to minister to all, regardless of race or gender or nationality.

The Lenten season for me is a time of quiet reflection, looking inward through prayer and contemplation. Doing this with the certainty that God pays attention when we come to him humbly. This message is Universal and regardless of our sins. Our restoration may not be physical, as it was for the deaf and mute man, but it will be spiritual. So let us walk gently today in persistent conversation with God.

Ginny Whitehill

Tuesday, March 17

[1 Corinthians 8:1-10](#)

"As concerning therefore the eating of things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that the idol is nothing in the world and there is none other God but one."

As the ancient, burgeoning church struggled to define how their beliefs applied in an era where society worshipped many gods as part of daily life, Paul reminded the Corinthians that there is only one God. He encouraged them to act responsibly and to protect other Christians from misinformation and misdirection by living as an example.

This remains sound advice for us today. We are constantly bombarded by outside influences that can twist our perspective and challenge our beliefs. Social media, school, and the workplace are often filled with temptations where standards, expectations, and norms differ significantly from those of our church community.

Prayer: *Dear Lord, give us the wisdom and clarity to curate our lives according to your laws and protect us against the quiet harm that lies in complacency. Amen.*

Julie Clough

Wednesday, March 18

[Genesis 50:15-26](#)

*"You plotted evil against me, but God turned it into good."
"You have nothing to fear. I will take care of you and your children."
So he reassured them with kind words that touched their hearts.*

Joseph, Jacob's most beloved child, the son with the technicolor dreamcoat had jealous brothers who ambushed him, threw him into a well, and then sold him into slavery. After Joseph was betrayed by his siblings, God seemed to have a hand in his fate, and everything Joseph did benefitted Egypt and helped him rise into high positions of influence and trust. Years later, Joseph's delinquent brothers show up to buy grain during a famine, and he forgives their transgressions. However, before giving Joseph praise for his unselfish exoneration, we have to remember the many hoops Joseph made the brothers jump through before he felt they were worthy of forgiveness. Joseph recognized his brothers but did not identify himself. He accused the brothers of being spies. He imprisoned Simeon and demanded the brothers return with their youngest brother Benjamin. To test their honesty, Joseph had the money the brothers paid replaced in their packs. Finally he planted a silver cup in Benjamin's sack to see if the brothers would abandon Benjamin. Joseph's forgiveness appears to be contingent upon a test of character to see if the brothers really deserved his favor. Joseph was demonstrating stages that we, as mere humans, go through when we wrestle with forgiveness.

Forgiveness is mentioned in the Bible at least 120 times, and when asked how many times a person must forgive, Jesus replied 70x7, meaning we must forgive until we reach perfection. When we think of forgiveness, we think of people forgiving other people, but when we think of God's forgiveness, we often refer to God's grace. What is the difference?

Grace is mentioned in the Bible 150 to 170 times and can be defined as God's freely given, undeserved love, kindness, and favor. It is proactive and is God's choice to extend kindness and opportunity, even when it is unearned. Grace leads to salvation and connection. Humans demonstrate grace through understanding, patience, and compassion towards others despite their flaws.

Forgiveness is often referred to as the deliberate decision to let go of resentment, anger, or claim against someone who has wronged you. Forgiveness is reactive. It is a choice made in response to an offense, often made with reluctance. Humans demonstrate forgiveness by releasing blame, not holding on to bitterness, and choosing not to seek revenge. Forgiveness can bring a feeling of peace both to the forgiving and the forgiven.

Maundy is a Latin term meaning "commandment." On Maundy Thursday, we remember Jesus' greatest commandments, *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength, and Love your neighbor as yourself."* Perhaps, this is one way Jesus is encouraging us to expand our practice of forgiveness and strive toward the overflowing, unlimited nature of God's grace. Imagine the harmony and community we can create as we all grow in our practice of forgiveness and strive toward extending grace to all.

Barb German

Thursday, March 19

[1 Corinthians 12:12-26](#)

The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."...Our less respectable members are treated with greater respect.

1 Corinthians 12:21, 23b

The little black-haired girl in the blue dress, maybe six or seven, was racing between the front pew and the chancel, her footsteps echoing on the carpeted wood floor. Round and round the perimeter of the sanctuary she ran, even as the worship service began and the pastor gave her welcome and led us in a silent prayer to begin the service.

We were visitors on the Sunday before Christmas in a United Methodist church in upstate New York. I was trying to enter the spirit of worship, but with obvious difficulty. I thought to myself, "How annoying is this little girl! Is she ever going to stop running? Is no one going to stop her?" I stole a glance to my right and to my left, and no one else in the congregation seemed to be bothered. After a while, the running stopped, and I did not see the little girl again, until the pastor called the children forward to the chancel for the children's message. And the energetic black-haired girl in the blue dress came and sat down with five or six other children of varying ages to interact with the pastor. Once she even gave a good answer to one of the pastor's questions. And I began to realize that that disruptive little girl was obviously a valued member of that congregation!

The Apostle Paul's comparison of the church to a human body, where every part of the body has a particular function and every part naturally fulfills its role, so that the body as a whole performs as it should, describes Paul's ideal of what a Christian congregation should look like. The church, the body of Christ, should function just as smoothly and effortlessly and agreeably as a human body.

But have you noticed how often in real life, in the nitty-gritty of conflicting personalities and eccentric personal traits and peculiar sensitivities, Paul's quaint description of the church seems a little too easy? Sometimes, accepting the quirks of other children of God, whatever age they may be, is hard work!

And my experience, the Sunday before Christmas, reminds me that I still have work to do.

Prayer: *Loving God, please make me more accepting and less judgmental of others. Amen.*

Steve Young

Friday, March 20

[1 Corinthians 12:27-13:3](#)

*...and though I'd bestow all my goods to feed the poor,
and I give my body to be burned, but have not love. It profits me nothing.*

1 Corinthians 13:3

Lent is a time of giving up or taking on, but first Corinthians 13 :3 shifts the focus from what we do to why we do it. This week try serving someone without seeking recognition. We need a heart of true love, unconditional and focused on the good of others, mirroring Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

Everything we do, don't do, face and don't face, is touched by his continuing love. Everything about us hinges on love because God, who is love, created us in His image. Because God loves us, He gives us blessings and lets us share them. When we pray and are told to wait, it is because He loves us and knows we need time to grow. When the overwhelming choice before us makes it hard to know which way is up, our Lord and Savior shows us our need to depend on his guiding love.

While we are to live in faith and hope, our most important dwelling place is God's love. Without making his love our ultimate dwelling, we cannot fully live in faith and hope. We need to remain keenly sensitive to the greatest of these – OUR FATHER'S LOVE.

Prayer: *Glorious Lord, may my words, thoughts, and actions always sound forth the beautiful love of Christ.*

CF Williams

Saturday, March 21

[1 Corinthians 13:1-13](#)

...the greatest of these is love.

1 Corinthians 13:13

The love chapter of the New Testament is beautiful. Every word flows like music (like the Old Testament Psalms). I counted the word "love" 10 times, and the word "it" (referring to "love") 8 times...that is 18 times in 13 verses (72% - an average of 2 times per verse). The Apostle Paul surely wanted us to know the meaning of love...God's love, for God is love.

As the 3 crosses were placed along the roads across our country as reminders of God's greatest love for us, the letters L O V E are being seen in decorative designs in many places. In our Commonwealth, the L O V E letters are probably standing for "Virginia is for Lovers," but I see them, and the crosses, as the connection of our Christian hearts to our Lord's death, the great sacrifice (God's love) to save us from our sins and to give us eternal life with Him. The existence of these crosses and L O V E letters are truly reminders of God's love for us. Perhaps they next time

you may see one or the other, or both, say to yourself, "God's love did this for me, a sinner such as I am; I am most grateful for His love for me."

Henry Drummond once said that he knew a man who read the love chapter (13 verses) every day for 3 months and it changed his life.

A person who is hard to love needs it the most.

We know that water is a conductor of electricity. One day in my morning shower, these thoughts came to me. God's love is like the shower water, once you turn it on, it flows gently over you, covering you completely. But once you turn the water off, the water flow stops. We must not let God's love ever be turned off by us. We must let it flow freely around us, over us, and out to others. Love is not yours to keep. You must give it away. There is always enough of God's love to keep on giving it away. You know, "pay it forward"...God gives you His love, you pass that love on to others. Each time that love returns to you, you give it away, repeats continually.

Love is the universal spiritual gift and universal means everybody, everywhere, no limits, endless. God's love gift to us.

For the Children:

"I will master it," said the axe, as his blows fell heavily on the iron. And every blow made the edge more blunt until it ceased to strike.

"Leave it to me," said the saw; and with his relentless teeth he worked backward and forward on its surface until its teeth were worn down and broken and he fell aside.

"Ha, ha," said the hammer. "I knew you would not succeed! I will show you the way!" But at the first fierce strike, off flew his head, and the iron remained the same.

"Shall I try?" asked the still small flame. They all despised the flame, but he curled gently around the iron and embraced it and never left until it melted under his irresistible influence.

~Unknown

"Hard, indeed, is the heart that can resist love."

And know abideth faith, hope, and love – but the greatest of these is love.

1 Corinthians 13:13

Marylee Huffman

Sunday, March 22

[Romans 12:1-21](#)

A Life Offered to God

Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Romans 12:2

Lent invites a slow, honest look at the heart, and Romans 12 speaks directly into that sacred work. Paul urges us to "*present your bodies as a living sacrifice*," a phrase that feels both beautiful and unpleasant. Sacrifice is rarely convenient. It asks for surrender, for loosening our grip on the habits, attitudes, and comforts that keep us from deeper transformation.

As I sit with this passage, I notice how often I want renewal without release. I want God to change me, but I also want to keep my preferences. Lent gently exposes that tension. It reminds me that transformation begins when I stop trying to fit God into my life and instead allow God to reshape my life around Christ.

Paul's words are extremely practical. Let love be genuine. Bless those who persecute you. Do not be haughty. Overcome evil with good. These aren't abstract ideals; they are daily choices. They challenge the way I speak, react, forgive, and show up for others. They push me to examine the places where my love can be selective, my patience thin, and my humility fragile.

Lent is not about self-deprecation but about clearing space for grace. When I acknowledge where I fall short, I also open myself to the Spirit's quiet work, renewing my mind, softening my heart, and shaping me into someone who reflects Christ a little more clearly.

Today, I'm invited to offer myself again. Not perfectly, but willingly. To let God transform what I cannot fix. To practice love that costs something. To choose peace when retaliation feels easier. To trust that every small act of surrender becomes a seed of resurrection.

Prayer: *God of mercy, receive the parts of me I struggle to surrender. Renew my mind where it has grown rigid, soften my heart where it has hardened, and teach me to love in ways that reflect Christ. Shape my life into a living offering. Holy, honest, and open to your transforming grace. Amen.*

Bonnie Andrade

Monday, March 23

[Mark 9:30-41](#)

He took a little child whom he placed among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, "Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me."

Mark 9:36-37

Greatness in God's Kingdom is not about status, power, or recognition, but is for all people. In these few verses of today's longer focus scripture, Jesus acknowledges the value of the least and the small, confirming that children, outsiders, and even the simplest of acts matter deeply to God.

With the family loaded in the car last year on Holy Saturday, four-year-old Opal announced, "Dad! Mom said I could buy something at the thrift store!" Her dad teasingly replied that she might have to devise a way to start earning money to support her shopping desires. Of course, getting a paying job at that age is a silly thought, so her mom further teased that maybe she could sell her blood. Sweetly, and without hesitation my little granddaughter replied, "But, you can't buy Jesus' blood."

'Out of the mouths of babes' came this statement of profound truth and wisdom. Pure. Humble. Faith-filled. We were all silent for a moment while her words sunk in.

I'm pretty sure that God was pleased with this small, witness-of-a-child. We don't have to be trained clergy, professional public speakers, or rich and powerful people to be heard, to be

pleasing to God, and to further God's Kingdom. God notices faithfulness even in small ways; even in the witness of a preschooler.

Prayer: *Dear Loving God, as we journey toward the cross, may we recognize your presence in the child, the stranger, and the least among us. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Carole Gaines

Tuesday, March 24

[1 Corinthians 14:20-33a, 39-40](#)

What then shall we say, brothers and sisters? When you come together, each of you has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. Everything must be done so that the church may be built up.

1 Corinthians 14:26

Paul is writing to the church in Corinth and giving instructions about how to live in community with each other, even getting into the specifics about how to order a worship service. Chapter 14 opens with encouragement to pursue love and spiritual gifts - all in order to build up the community.

The worship services we participate in at Otterbein are based on ancient traditions that have carried us to the present day. Of course, we make adjustments for our present circumstances, but the basic structure has persisted. And, Paul tells us that each of us has something to contribute both to the worshipping community and to the order of worship. We are continually reminded that we are to be participants in worship, not just observers! How are you being an active participant in worship services and in the community? How have you been growing in love and exploring your spiritual gifts?

A Blessing from John O'Donohue

May you be blessed with good friends.

May you learn to be a good friend to yourself.

May you be able to journey to that place in your soul where there is great love, warmth, feeling and forgiveness.

May this change you.

May it transfigure that which is negative, distant, or cold in you.

May you be brought in to the real passion, kinship, and affinity of belonging.

May you treasure your friends.

May you be good to them and may you be there for them; may they bring you all the blessings, challenges, truth, and light that you need for your journey.

May you never be isolated.

May you always be in the gentle nest of belonging with your anam cara (soul friend).

Amen.

May we all this Lent learn to do everything in love and seek to grow our spiritual gifts for the good of ourselves and our community.

Christy Blagg

Wednesday, March 25

[Mark 10:1-16](#)

*Then He arose from there and came to the region of Judea by the other side of the Jordan. And multitudes gathered to Him again, and as He was accustomed, He taught them again. The Pharisees came and asked Him, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" testing Him. And He answered and said to them, "What did Moses command you?" They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce, and to dismiss her." And Jesus answered and said to them, "Because of the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. **But from the beginning of the creation, God 'made them male and female.'** 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh.*

Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."

*In the house His disciples also asked Him again about the same matter. So He said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery." Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, **"Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God.** Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it." And He took them up in His arms, put His hands on them, and blessed them.*

Mark 10:1-16

Clinging to Love

Lent invites us into holy examination—not merely of our behaviors, but of the attachments that drive them. What do we cling to when life presses in? What do we loosen our grip on when obedience becomes costly?

In Mark 10, Jesus speaks first about marriage and then about children, but beneath both runs a single, steady current: God's desire for an unbroken union rooted in love.

But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' 'For this reason man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.

Mark 10:6-9

These words are often heard only as instruction for marriage. Yet they also echo with a deeper promise. Scripture repeatedly names God's people as a bride—chosen, loved, and bound to Him by covenant. Christ is the Bridegroom, and the Church is being prepared for a wedding not yet fully seen.

A bride does not prepare herself casually but with great expectation and intent. She does not hold back part of her heart “just in case.” She leans fully into the promise, trusting the one who has pledged himself to her. So it is with the Church. Lent reminds us that our union with Christ is not meant to be partial or provisional. What God has joined together — Christ and His Church — was never meant to be separated, not by fear, not by pride, not by distraction, and not by the quiet drift of divided loyalties.

Separation often begins subtly. We loosen our grip on God when self-reliance feels safer than surrender. We step back when obedience costs comfort. We forget that covenant love is sustained not by control, but by clinging to God in all circumstances.

At first glance, the shift from divorce to little children may seem to be the addition of an anecdotal remembrance by Mark.

*Let the little children come to me; do not stop them
for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.*

Mark 10:14

Instead, the passage is a living metaphor showing how we should come to Christ. Children do not negotiate love. When they are hurt, afraid, or sick, they cling — arms tight around a parent’s neck, face pressed close seeking comfort and trusting completely. They do not question whether they are welcome. They simply cling to love for comfort and healing.

Lent strips away the illusion that spiritual maturity means independence from God. In truth, spiritual maturity is a return to a pure and child-like love that knows where safety lies. The Church prepares herself for Christ not through strength, but through surrender; not through self-justification, but through repentance; not through separation, but through nearness.

This Lent, hear Jesus’ invitation anew. Do not separate yourself. Cling to God as one who knows His love is faithful and true. And trust in God who, from the beginning, intends an unbreakable bond of love — for us to be one with Him eternally.

Prayer: *Heavenly Father, draw us closer to You and teach us again to cling to You with childlike faith, until the day we are made one with You. Amen.*

Kent Carneal

Thursday, March 26

[Mark 10:17-31](#)

I love this passage of the Bible. It is bold, dramatic, and recognizable to many while still communicating a beautifully clear message. I like that it immediately addresses the source of all goodness and levity – God himself. When Jesus is called to be good by man, Jesus redirects this idea to God by saying that only God is truly good, and that whatever gifts Jesus has, he possesses them because God willed it so. Jesus is shown here as a messenger and teacher for the Lord and His Gospel. People often speak directly of Jesus and His Love, and I enjoy how he turns the credit elsewhere in this passage.

Also, the messages of who can get into heaven here are especially poignant. Jesus speaks of how incredibly difficult it is for the rich to enter heaven. This was shocking to the man speaking

with Jesus, as the man had considerable wealth of his own. But, the line about the camel going through the needle is very evocative of the sin of hoarding wealth, and the dangers that come from doing so. I would say that a deeper read into this passage brings into light the nature of wealth in general, and how an excess of funds or resources can slowly lead one to have less concern for their fellow man, thus being less righteous in the eyes of God. The text speaks of reversing social paradigms, and I believe all of these points are important to keep in mind with today's growing wealth gap and political climate.

Dan Curtis

Friday, March 27

[2 Corinthians 4:1-12](#)

Verse 7 of this selection says...

*But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this
all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.*

I have always been fascinated by this verse. Anytime I start to think too much of myself, I remind ME that I am fragile, easily broken, susceptible to not only what the world throws at me, but what damage I can do to ME. The good news is that despite our fragileness we are designed to be capable of doing things that will make Jesus Christ proud.

As I settle down into the mid-80s of life, I have tried to start doing two things with new energy. The first is to get the jar of clay called ME in better shape. Losing weight, exercising (as if it is fun), eating better (as if it is fun), and challenging my doctors to take pride in keeping this jar from falling apart. The second thing is to serve Jesus by being Jesus to others in need. It may be by praying for them, being their friend as they die, visiting them, listening to them, doing an errand, whatever... I've seen that the first thing gives me more enthusiasm for the second thing.

As Lent marches toward Easter, I'll keep trying to get the jar called ME in top working order so even when the jar shows some cracks, I'll still be able to be Jesus to someone who needs his presence.

Prayer: *Dear Jesus, use this jar as you need to help ME bring YOU to someone in need. Amen.*

Larry Clark

Saturday, March 28

[2 Corinthians 4:13-18](#)

Upon first reading this verse, I am immediately reminded of one of my favorite bands growing up who uses this chapter for its namesake: Jars of Clay. The memory often takes me back to simpler times, good memories, but also darker times in which music helped carry me through. The symbolism more or less challenges us to look at ourselves as jars of clay molded by God's hands for the purpose of spreading His word.

In this scripture Paul speaks of the common threads that bind us together as Christians. The main thread being faith. *"For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."* As Christians our faith is what gives us hope throughout our hardships. Although we go through these hardships, we still hold tight to our faith that God will keep true to His promises. Each day can bring physical and mental anguish, but despite these things, *"...we do not give up. Even though our outer person is being destroyed, our inner person is being renewed day by day."* These words are so encouraging. We are reminded to not lose heart, to proclaim the good news of the gospel, to spread the grace that comes from going through times of suffering.

It all sounds so simple; walking through life feeling blessed, keeping the faith, holding onto the grace and goodness that can only come from God. But then we circle back to the life lessons that help teach us these things; rejection, suffering, mourning, loss, and we are reminded that we must endure before we can truly appreciate these things and choose to live by faith.

Prayer: *God, through this Lenten season let us be reminded to focus on things unseen. Help us to put our trust in You as we both go through hardships and celebrate small victories. Let us know that You are there through it all if we just keep the faith. Amen.*

Erin Wenger

Sunday, March 29

[Zechariah 9:9-12](#)

Today we begin Holy Week and take another look at the day Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a young donkey. It is strange to see one whom many were calling King riding into town that way but Jesus knew what he was doing. He knew the old prophet Zechariah's words, *"Your king comes to you, humble, and riding on a donkeys colt."* The King comes on a donkey, but he's still the king.

In Matthew 21:10 we read *"And when he entered Jerusalem, all the city was stirred, saying Who is this?"* That is the question that no doubt was on everyone's lips as Jesus rides into Jerusalem on the back of that donkey. When Jesus passed by, did they really understand as they shouted "Hosanna," what that meant? Was not Jesus finally going to manifest the fullness of God's power, take his place on the throne of David, and overthrow the Romans? But Jesus did not go to Jerusalem that day to sit on a throne. He came to be a servant, knowing that that would mean giving his life upon the cross. The cries of people "Crucify him!" just a few days later would suggest that their understanding of Jesus and his saving work was seemingly incomplete. For Jesus came not to build an earthly kingdom. His kingdom was not of this world. Jesus came to suffer and die...for us and for the world.

There are those even today who may not know who Jesus is. And for those persons may we, the Body of Christ, the church, faithfully exhibit and reflect the unfailing love of God in such a way that they will understand who He is.

Prayer: *Stir my heart, O God, and grant me the humility, love and courage to be your witness today. Amen.*

Rudy Smith

Monday, March 30

[Lamentations 1:1-2, 6-12](#)

A Fallen Jerusalem

How lonely lies Jerusalem, once so full of people! Once honored by the world she is now like a widow. The noblest of cities has fallen into slavery. All night long she cries; tears run down her cheeks. Of all her former friends, not one is left to comfort her. Her allies have betrayed her and are all against her now.

Lamentations 1:1-2 (Good News Bible)

Lamentations, known as the book of tears, is a funeral song written for the fallen city of Jerusalem because of sin and the people's abandonment of God. It was written by the weeping prophet, Jeremiah, whose grief ran deep for the city of Jerusalem after it had been destroyed by Babylon and her people killed, tortured, or taken captive.

Jeremiah wept because the people had rejected their God, who had made them, loved them, and sought repeatedly to bless them. He knew that the selfishness and sinfulness of the people would bring suffering and an extended exile and it broke his heart.

There was no one to comfort the people. Former friends who praised Jerusalem were now enemies who despised her and even the Lord was like an enemy to His people.

"Look at me!" she cries to everyone who passes by. No one has ever had pain like mine, pain that the Lord brought on me in the time of his anger." (Lamentations 1:12, Good News Bible)

According to Nelson's Quick Reference Bible Commentary, "verse 12 is sometimes applied to our Lord Jesus Christ when He hung on the cross. Except for a small group of followers who stayed at the cross, nobody else offered Him any sympathy. They mocked Him and added to his pain. Yet, He did it for you and me. He felt the anger of God against our sins."

The key lesson of Lamentation is that God must punish sin, but His mercy never fails.

Prayer: *Heavenly Father, Ruler of Nations, rule this world by your gracious and mighty power and grant that righteousness and peace may prevail everywhere. Amen.*

Wilma Mitchell

Tuesday, March 31

[2 Corinthians 1:8-22](#)

Have you ever bought a product and been happy you had a warranty? Or, worse, bought a product, denied the optional add-on warranty, and regretted it? There's not much we can do to foresee future issues with our earthly purchases, but we can live knowing that there is a warranty that we can live by: we believe in the Holy Spirit. When we say this statement in the Apostles' Creed, we are saying that we believe that the Holy Spirit is our guarantee and that God keeps His promises. He hears our prayers and promises He will never reject or abandon us.

Still, the human condition is multi-faceted, and doubt can creep in. When the doubts and temptations creep in and you feel at your most vulnerable and weak, think of the Apostles' Creed and God's guarantee. He loves us, and His promises stand firm.

Prayer: *Dear God, I pray that when I feel weak, I feel your strength. I pray that when I have doubts, you remind me of your promises. May we all grow in our trust in you this Lenten season and throughout life. Amen.*

Sarah Macomber

Wednesday, April 1

[Lamentations 2:1-9, 14-17](#), [2 Corinthians 1:23-2:11](#), [Mark 12:1-11](#)

When God Is Silent, Stay Faithful

There is a kind of silence many of us know well. It is the quiet after loss, after difficult news, after prayers that seem unanswered. Lent invites us not to rush past that silence, but to listen within it.

In **Lamentations 2**, Jerusalem lies in ruins. The people ignored God's warnings and trusted false assurances. Now the city is quiet, broken, and grieving. The scripture does not soften the pain. Instead, lament itself, the passionate expression of sorrow, becomes an act of faith. Even in silence, the people are still speaking to God.

In **2 Corinthians**, Paul explains a different kind of silence. He delays visiting the church not out of neglect, but out of love. Discipline, he reminds them, must always move toward forgiveness. Grief and correction are meant to restore, not destroy.

Then in **Mark 12**, Jesus tells of tenants who reject every messenger, even God's son. The story is stark, but it ends with hope: *"The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone."* What people discard, God redeems.

These scriptures teach a hard Lenten truth: God's patience is real, God's warnings are loving, and God's purposes endure even when we resist or fail to listen.

This week, sit quietly with God and ask:

Is there a truth I've avoided?

A relationship needing forgiveness?

A voice I've tuned out?

Faithfulness often begins by staying present in the silence.

Prayer: *Faithful God, when answers feel far away, keep our hearts open to Your truth. Where we resist You, soften us. Where we have wounded others, lead us toward forgiveness. Help us trust the cornerstone that remains. Amen.*

Dave & Donna Fickes

Thursday, April 2

[Mark 14:12-26](#)

The Passover Meal

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." He took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, and they all drank from it. He said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. I assure you that I won't drink wine again until that day when I drink it in a new way in God's kingdom."

After singing songs of praise, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Mark 14:22-26

This is a familiar story. We hear it almost every Sunday in worship as Pastor Adam leads the congregation in the liturgy of the Great Thanksgiving: "take and eat, take and drink." We are also reminded that the "table" is not "Otterbein's table," not the United Methodist table, not exclusive to only certain people, but expansive in scope and reach. ALL are welcome and encouraged to be present and accept the gracious love and mercy of God. We are reminded to share God's love with all people, without regard to sex, gender, race, color, economic status, age, immigration status, or any other distinction we often try to make. Jesus makes known that ALL are loved and welcome at His table. We know that at the table with Jesus was Judas, who would betray him later that evening, and Peter who would deny him 3 times, and all the others who ran away in fear. Even so, Jesus loved them all and celebrated the Passover meal with them and sang songs of praise with them before going to the Mount of Olives. Jesus knew, and yet His love extended to all.

Prayer: *Gracious God, remind us always that your love is expansive, unending and steadfast. Help us to be true to your mercy and grace as we live out loving our neighbors every day. Give us strength to stand with and for those who get pushed aside and demonized by persons in power. Help us hear the cries of the forgotten and act in love toward all. Amen.*

I invite you to listen to Carrie Newcomer's song *Room at the Table*:

<https://youtu.be/6Plf7nD6HJ0?si=k9G4Jkfhza2uDoFl>

Pat Wingert

Friday, April 3

[John 13:36-38](#)

Simon Peter asked him, "Lord, where are you going? Jesus replied, 'Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later.' Peter asked, "Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." Then Jesus answered, "Will you really lay down your life for me? Very truly I tell you, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!"

John 13:36-38

This is an extremely familiar verse and often mentioned at this time of the year.

As a child I always wondered why Good Friday was considered good, since it was the day Christ was crucified. Only later did I understand how Christ's sacrifice on the cross served to allow mankind's salvation. Mankind was redeemed, given a second chance by Christ's suffering and death.

Simon Peter, who asked shamefully, first boasting as to how he would give his all for Christ, and then in a matter of hours was reduced to denying he even knew Christ, was also given a second chance, and he made the most of it by becoming for Christ the "rock" on which his church would be built.

While the story of Passion Week certainly has its dark moments, we too can rejoice in the second chance its events create for all of us.

We also must strive to be like Simon Peter and not squander this second chance, which allows us to conquer death and have life everlasting.

Prayer: *Dear Lord, thank you for the second chance your suffering and death provided for all mankind, help me to live a life worthy of your great sacrifice. Amen.*

Jim Clough

Saturday, April 4

[Hebrews 4:1-16](#)

This fourth chapter of Hebrews focuses on the Sabbath rest for the people of God. Genesis 2:2-3 says "By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day He rested from all His work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it He rested from all the work of creating that He had done."

The author of Hebrews does not identify himself, but some think it was Paul. The author begins this chapter with; "Therefore, since the promise of entering His rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. For we also have had the good news proclaimed to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because they did not share the faith of those who obeyed."

It is important to have that day of rest. To rest from all the labor of six days in a week. This refers to the present rest. Additionally, the author is speaking about the future rest, the eternal rest with God. All our good works by themselves will not get us into Heaven. It is our faith in Jesus and His work that we are saved. Through Jesus, we are able to approach the throne of God the Father. Verse 16 says: "*Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*"

"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in me.

In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you.

I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you,

I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also."

John 14:1-3 (KJV)

In conclusion, remember John 14:6; Jesus said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."* Amen!

Liz Lawson

Sunday, April 5

[Luke 24:13-35](#)

What a joyous time of the year! As I write, I look forward to Easter with such anticipation. Outside some form of snow/sleet has frozen Harrisonburg roads and sidewalks, making travel perilous. I hope by the time you read this it has melted. Our Easter text is one of my favorites; it relates the long conversation between Jesus and two disciples while they travel between Jerusalem and Emmaus. The journey entails seven miles of conversation, beginning with their doubts and Jesus struggling to grasp why they are so "foolish" and concludes with a long discourse on meaning of scripture. Jesus seems to be truly dismayed that they have not put all the pieces together. They know of the witness of the women; they have available to them the scriptures and yet they do not understand what has occurred. Jesus spends rest of the journey explaining all that has occurred. And yet, what amazes me even more, is that they don't "see" Jesus for who he is. Only once they gather around the table and he breaks bread with them is his real presence revealed and they know it is Jesus who has been with them.

This passage resonates with me in two really important ways. First, I have my best conversations while walking. Either in person or on the phone I'd rather be walking and talking than being still. During this recent snow storm, I paced my basement while talking to people on the phone. I love reflecting on the day with Christy while we walk around the block. You can probably tell that I even have troubles standing still while preaching. Walking and talking are just natural for me, I would have felt right at home walking to Emmaus and listening to Jesus. The other aspect of this text that really connects with me is the liturgical element of Jesus being revealed to the disciples. We see the familiar pattern of worship unfolding in the text. *"Jesus took the bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to them."* This familiar pattern that has become a part of our Christian liturgy is found in Paul's letter to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 11:23-25) as well as in the accounts of Jesus feeding the masses in different gospel stories. In that liturgical act Jesus is revealed. *"Their eyes were open and they recognized him."* We all "see" Jesus in different ways, but for me I have always felt closest to the divine in a worship setting. I see Jesus when we break bread together, I see Jesus when we lift our voices in song, when we hear the word proclaimed, when we attend to being present with each other, acknowledging the work of the Spirit in our midst.

I hope this Lenten journey has given you opportunity to prepare for this joyous celebration ahead of us. I hope you have found your moments to "walk" with Jesus and are prepared to "see" him in whatever way that speaks clearly to you. Happy Easter! Christ is Risen! Christ is Risen Indeed!

Adam Blagg