

Lent Devotional 2025



Written by:
Staff and Lay People
of FUMC Burleson

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Welcome to our Lenten devotional for 2025! Our prayer is that you will dive into this special 40-day season of transformation by setting a time of reading a devotional and prayer each day, except on Sundays. We invite you to join us for worship either in-person or online.

This is a season in the Christian year to say “No” to food, bad habits and thoughts, vices, people, desires, and other things so we can ultimately say “Yes” to God. As we deny ourselves of the aforementioned, we have to replace it with something righteous; therefore, we suggest prayer, reflection, Bible / spiritual reading, acts of mercy and kindness, worship, and giving. You might be asking, “What is the difference from what I would do naturally if it were not the season of Lent?”

One, as you engage in this season of denial of self and strengthening your desire for God, you will be engaging in this collectively with Christian brothers and sisters around the world. Also, you will be engaging with your brothers and sisters locally at First UMC Burleson, that together we might encourage and pray for one another while on this journey. This can be a powerful experience of combined faith in action building the Kingdom of God on earth.

Two, it’s a denial of 1-3 things in your life that you really love and believe you cannot do without. Some people choose to give up food or drink, or negative language or the negative company they keep. Some others choose an “add-on” approach, such as adding a time in their lives for attending Sunday school, or one of the many Bible studies we offer, or joining the mission work of the church. Whatever it is—whether giving up or adding on—your ultimate goal is to prove to God and yourself that you love and need God more than whatever you crave most; that God is your truest source of satisfaction and strength.

I pray that you will meet the Lord Jesus Christ on your journey!

Your Brother in Christ,
Pastor Kyland

Calendar of Events

Weekly Worship Schedule:	Saturday Family Style Meal	5p, worship 5:30p
	Sunday Connect Worship	9a
	Sunday Traditional worship	11a
Wednesdays at First(weekly):	Kid Connection (grades K-5)	3:30p-5:00p
	Free Community Meal	5:00p
	Pastors' Bible Study	6p
	First Youth (grades 6-12)	6p
	Grow the Garden Group	6p
	Glory Ringers Handbells	6p
	Chancel Choir	7p
Weekly Activities	G.I.F.T. Bible Study(Tues)	9:30a
	Sunday School Groups	10:00a
	First Youth (Sun)	5:08p
	Free Yoga for All (Tues)	6:00p
	Crochet Class (Sat)	10:00a
<i>Special Events</i>		
March 15	Whitlee Casey Concert	7:00p
April 4	First Youth Talent Show	7:00p
April 13	Eggstravaganza	2:00p
Easter Weekend (4/19-20)	Family Style Meal 4/19	5p
	Family Style Worship 4/19	5:30p
	Sunrise Service 4/20	7a
	Connect Worship 4/20	9a
	Traditional Worship 4/20	11a

Week 1 Theme: LIFTING UP THE LOWLY

Day 1 - March 6, 2025

Scripture: Luke 1:53 - *He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away with empty hands.*

Written by: Cindy Mendoza

Two young boys were playing soccer in the streets of their neighborhood. One day, a man approached them with a new ball and asked if they would like for him to teach them some basic skills. One of the boys walked away, scoffing the man and replying that he already knew how to play and didn't need his help. The other boy, who came from a home where his father was an alcoholic and his mother was the sole provider for their family, eagerly approached the man. This boy had been playing with a ball he made from rags and bottles so he quickly took the new ball and started kicking it with direction from the kind stranger. As he grew, the boy never forgot the man who took the time to teach him and encourage him in a sport he dearly loved. The gift evolved into his long and successful career as a professional soccer player, always taking the time to greet children who watched him play and passing on the kindness and encouragement that blessed his life. The other young boy? No one knows.

Reflection: Are you an example to others as someone with the humility and hunger to accept and be receptive to God's blessings? Or are you self-satisfied to be the master of your own life and destiny?

Prayer: Dearest Lord, let us approach you in humility and the desire to have our hunger filled by your blessings. Nourish our souls with the food of our faith and make us an earthly example of your Heavenly goodness. Amen



Day 2 - March 7, 2025

Scripture: Luke 1:51-53 - *He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.*

Written by: Kylie Campbell

My dad and grandparents co-owned a Salvage Yard for over twenty-five years. This means that I spent a lot of time at the Yard growing up (Texans seem to call it a junk yard but just picture a lot of land with a lot of cars and spare parts). I'd help my mom file car titles by number as soon as I could read numbers, help keep things clean around the office, entertain the yard cats, chase down golf balls my dad would hit in the back to receive 25c for finding them, and go on daily adventures with my two older brothers.

Eventually I'd answer phone calls, look up parts, pull parts, and even deliver them. Cooks Auto Salvage was definitely a family business and although I have tons of memories growing up of helping out, the most memorable moments were how my family treated their employees and their customers. I can clearly hear my dad greeting folks as they came in "Hey brother! What's going on?" to complete strangers. Most would say "hey" back but some would say "brother?" And my dad would respond "We're all brothers in Christ."

My dad and grandpa would hire folks down on their luck. Usually men, often who had just gotten out of jail and were on parole. Men who looked pretty rough and tough on the outside. But those same men, who could talk like sailors, were the sweetest guys in the world to me. They made sure I stayed out of trouble, helped teach me about cars and how to pull parts, and treated me like family. Looking back I can see that they treated me like family because my dad treated them like family.

And the customers. I remember so many times that folks would come into the Yard in tears because they needed a part for their car to support their livelihood and didn't have money. My dad or grandpa or grandma would say - so what do you have? And they'd barter. We ended up with some super cool stuff but way more than that, we ended up with clients who came back, who spread the word, who knew that we were good people. Who knew that it wasn't about the money, it was about the people.

Reflection: My prayer for us is that we treat everyone who walks through our doors with a "hey brother!" or "hey sister" knowing that we are connected through Christ. And that we show those who are different from us compassion and kindness, and that at the end of the day, we know we are all family.

Prayer: Dear God, help us to better treat everyone as our brother or sister in Christ, no matter their circumstances. Amen



Day 3 - March 8, 2025

Scripture: Luke 10: 25-37 - *On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?" He answered, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'*[a]; and, *'Love your neighbor as yourself.'*[b]" "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live." But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii[c] and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.' "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him. Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

Written by: Tonya Frantz

The Good Samaritan is a story many of us have read or heard often. Jesus lays out for us in this parable how we are to treat others, especially those we deem as unworthy. Jesus shows us what compassion and justice are as well as what they are not. Just before he begins the story, Jesus gives us this scripture about loving God and loving neighbor.

v.27

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind and Love your neighbor as yourself."

And then Jesus breaks this down for us in a parable. Loving sometimes means doing hard things, loving can take us out of our "comfort zone" and our "neighbor" really does mean anyone. Jesus' Jewish audience would have been appalled that the Samaritan was the hero of this story, for the Jews would walk miles out of their way to avoid walking through Samaria. Not only does the Samaritan touch this man who's been beaten; he bandages his wounds, carries him to get help and then he pays for

the man's shelter. At the end of the story, the Samaritan tells the Innkeeper to let him know if there are any extra expenses that haven't been covered by what he's already paid. If so, the Samaritan will pay the Innkeeper additional money when he returns. This is radical hospitality, this is extravagant generosity, this is compassion, mercy and justice.

Hillsong the band has a song called "Hosanna" and one of my favorite lines from this song is:

*"Heal my heart and make it clean
Open up my eyes to the things unseen
Show me how to love like You have loved me
Break my heart for what breaks Yours
Everything I am for Your kingdom's cause
As I walk from earth into eternity"*

Reflection: Are there people in your life you need to love a little better? Ask God to break your heart for the things that break His heart and to show you where in your world you could be His hands and feet today. How might you be able to show justice and compassion to the lowly you come across?

Prayer: Dear God, open my eyes today to see people as you do. Show me where I can best be your hands and feet today. Give me the courage to go wherever you lead. Amen.



Day 4 - Sunday March 9, 2025

There is no devotion on Sunday. Instead we recommend that you rest, reflect on the week and regroup as you prepare for the week to come.



Day 5 - March 10, 2025

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 12:9 - *But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*

Written by: Whitney Clotfelter

Do you ever feel like you can't keep up with expectations? Whether it is the goals that you have set for yourself or things imposed by your job, your spouse, your children, society, or anywhere else--there is always MORE to be done, MORE to achieve, MORE to improve. Every email, website, article, and Instagram tells us how to improve our lives and sets impossible expectations. These things make me feel inadequate and like it is impossible to succeed. The level of productivity and perfection demanded by the world is not only impossible, but also unhealthy.

Lent is a great time to remember that God works differently than the world. God uses flawed people, economically disadvantaged people, and people who have no power or authority in this world to bring his glory and make his glory known. From the shepherds who first heard of the miracle of Jesus's birth to the woman at the well to the lepers ostracized by society to Paul who became the world's greatest evangelist by writing letters from his prison cell--God uses people where they are in whatever condition He finds them. Wherever you are, whoever you are, God can use you. Do not get caught up in needing to be something else. God's power is sufficient. When God uses the humble, the ordinary, the lowly, and the people society has rejected, his power shines through them so that the world sees the power of Christ. Use this time of Lent to let go of the unrealistic expectations of the world and to be ready to let God's power shine through you.

Reflection: What expectations could you let go of, and how could that make you more available to be used by God?

Prayer: God, help us to let go of expectations and be more available to be used by you. Amen



Day 6 -March 11, 2025

Scripture: Genesis 4:6-7 - *The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why do you look so resentful? If you do the right thing, won't you be accepted? But if you don't do the right thing, sin will be waiting at the door ready to strike! It will entice you, but you must rule over it."*; Luke 4:23-28 - *Then Jesus said to them, "Undoubtedly, you will quote this saying to me: 'Doctor, heal yourself. Do here in your hometown what we've heard you did in Capernaum.'" He said, "I assure you that no prophet is welcome in the prophet's hometown. And I can assure you that there were many widows in Israel during Elijah's time, when it didn't rain for three and a half years and there was a great food shortage in the land. Yet Elijah was sent to none of them but only to a widow in the city of Zarephath in the region of Sidon. There were also many persons with skin diseases in Israel during the time of the prophet Elisha, but none of them were cleansed. Instead, Naaman the Syrian was cleansed."*

When they heard this, everyone in the synagogue was filled with anger.

Written by: Melissa Ribinskas

As we lean into lifting up the lowly, focusing on justice and compassion, perhaps it would serve us to consider, why are we angry? Are we angry like Cain because someone else seems to be more favored? Are we angry like the people of Nazareth when Jesus told them that he wasn't here specifically, exclusively for them? Or, are we angry like Jesus when those with power and privilege exploit it, when the Church isn't the place it was meant to be. May this Lent be a season that we examine our anger, our resentment, and, to borrow a phrase from the Rend Collective song, "[Holy Trouble](#)", may it "give us a bold new vision of radical compassion."

Reflection: Consider what makes you angry. How can your anger be a tool for justice?

Prayer: God, use my anger to move me to act with radical compassion, to do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with you. Amen



Day 7 - March 12, 2025

Scripture: Luke 1:52-53- *"As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him, but the people did not welcome HIM because he was headed to Jerusalem."*

Written by: Maria Reed

A lot is happening in Luke 9: 51-53. To read that the Samaritan village would not welcome Jesus and his crew, is disappointing but not completely surprising. The relationship between Jews and Samaritans was strained, at best. Jesus knew, as the plans were made to return to Jerusalem, there would be opposition of all kinds, and it started early. Even on the outskirts of town, the message is sent, "you're not welcome here." Samaritans of the day wanted nothing to do with those who were Jewish, regardless of the good they had heard of Jesus and his followers.

Perhaps the most amazing thing about this passage is verse 51. Read this verse aloud a few times, and think about how you would present yourself to your friends and followers if you were Jesus. It would have been easy for him to ask the disciples to sneak in the backdoor of the hotel kitchen and get food and supplies. Today, that Jesus would use phrases like "below the radar" and "take a stealth approach." But that's not our Jesus. Knowing what he knows, the scripture says he resolutely set out for Jerusalem. That's our Jesus. To be resolute in the face of, "being taken up to

heaven.” Jesus wanted his followers to see that he was committed to the plan - for better or worse.

How can we show our friends, co-workers, and family that level of resolution in living our faith? Even when we may face going to heaven, even when we are unwelcome, even when the coming journey will be so hard! The answer, it seems, is to lean in resolutely and set out. When this is our heart and mindset, Jesus sees us trying to follow his ways. He is with you...boldly with you...confidently with you...resolutely with you!

Reflection: How can we show our friends and those we encounter what it means to be living in faith?

Prayer: Lord, with our heart set on you, please help us plan our journey to heaven resolutely. Help us be resolved to stay the course and keep our eyes on you. We love you, Lord. Amen



Day 8 - March 13, 2025

Scripture: Ephesians 4:32 - *Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*

Written by: Jessica Wasson

The new testament is full of advice and letters to churches of the day, much of it written by a man who persecuted Christians before his conversion. This man was of course Paul and he wrote many letters to churches struggling with various issues. Most, if not all, of those issues still plague us today. For me this issue Paul touches on in Ephesians 4:32 is the main point of the gospel - we are called to forgive others as Christ forgives us. Now, personally I do okay with this when someone wrongs me. But when someone wrongs someone I love, like my children or my husband, man do I struggle with this concept. I know I'm not alone in that - any other momma bears or dads understand where I'm coming from? but I am still called to forgive that person - EVEN IF they don't express remorse or ask for forgiveness. Goodness that's a challenge isn't it?

Paul knew the church would struggle with this - knew that we as humans hold on to things that we need to let go. He is encouraging us to be more like Jesus - who even on the cross told the thief he would be with him in paradise (more on that later!). Compassion comes when you can have empathy for another person - when you can

show kindness even when the other person might not deserve it. After all, who among us deserves all Jesus has done for us?

Reflection: How can you be more kind and compassionate towards others? How can you set aside your own feelings and be more like Jesus?

Prayer: God, help us to be more compassionate, no matter the circumstances. Help us to remember all Jesus has done for us. Amen



Day 9 - March 14, 2025

Scripture: Luke 6: 20-21; 24-25; 45 - *Then he looked up at his disciples and said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. "Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. "Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. "But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. "Woe to you who are full now, for you will be hungry. "Woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep. The good person out of the good treasure of the heart produces good, and the evil person out of evil treasure produces evil, for it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks.*

Written by: Melissa Ribinskas

The blessings and woes teachings of Jesus, recorded in Luke, challenge my perspective on abundance. Rarely do we think of having life abundantly as being marked with poverty, hunger and weeping. But this calls me to see the blessing lacking in resources might be when it leads to community in the kingdom; the blessing yearning for nourishment might be when it leads to persevering for very good rather than settling for good enough; the blessing having your heart break for the people and places that need justice might be when it leads to curiosity and compassion.

Reflection: Consider what is in abundance in your heart. How does that affect the ways your words and actions speak?

Prayer: God, may the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be pleasing to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer. Amen



Day 10 - Saturday, March 15, 2025

Scripture: Luke 7:1-10 - When Jesus had finished saying all this to the people who were listening, he entered Capernaum. There a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, "This man deserves to have you do this, because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue." So Jesus went with them. He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him: "Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, "I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel." Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well.

Written by: Neal Bridges

Luke 7 begins with the story of a centurion, seemingly well connected, well known, and reputable for his generosity (by having built a synagogue for the community). He was a powerful man of Rome, but he was admired in Israel, for it was said that the centurion 'loveth [their] nation.' But when the centurion's dearly loved slave was sick to the point of death, he did not approach Jesus, rather he sought intervention from the elders that they may convince Jesus to heal the dying slave. Jesus agreed, but upon his approach to the centurion's home, the man sent his friends to Jesus with a message. The message was unexpected: "I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof: Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee, but saying a word and my servant shall be healed."

Jesus healed the slave. The lowly in this story is actually not the sick slave, but the powerful and wealthy centurion. A man uncorrupted by his stature was able to recognize his low position in comparison to Jesus, and was so moved by the contrast that he felt himself unworthy to even meet Jesus in person. Yet he was a man who understood authority and so he had faith that Jesus need only to 'say in a word, and [the servant] shall be healed.'

The text says that Jesus "marvelled" at this message and then he spoke unto the crowd about the faith that was displayed by this humility. Similarly, when Jesus recognized the low station of the widow who lost her only son he raised the man from the dead. She had not even asked for the miracle, but Jesus recognized in her that

she was in the lowest station that she could have found herself in and so she was the perfect recipient for God’s compassion. The widow was restored with the resurrection of her son, and of course Jesus did this for her to protect her in society—an act of justice.

So then when Jesus is questioned by John the Baptist through his messengers he replied: don’t you see me doing the work of compassion and justice for the people? I have healed, raised the dead, preached the good news. Jesus then told everyone that, yes, John the Baptist is great, but those who are “least in the kingdom of God are greater than he.” How is this possible? Being humble and thinking of others is the key. Jesus is clearly reminding us that we are not the source of our accomplishments, we are to humble ourselves and rely on the strength of God.

Reflecting on the meaning of becoming lowly for the glory of God you can read: Matthew 23:12—“For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.” And Romans 12:10— “Be of the same mind towards one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.”

Reflection: What does it mean in 2025 to humble yourself? What blind spots do you have that prevent you from being lowly?

Prayer: God of glory and power, we are in awe of you. From the breath that fills our lungs to the majesty of the universe that you spoke into existence, we recognize how powerless we really are. But Jesus reminds us that when we embrace our humility, that we are able to glorify God, which leads to exaltation. To you be all the glory. Amen.



Day 11 - Sunday, March 16, 2025

There is no devotion on Sunday. Instead we recommend that you rest, reflect on the week and regroup as you prepare for the week to come.



Week 2 Theme: Simon, Do You See this Woman?

Day 12 - Monday, March 17, 2025

Scripture: Luke 7:44-50 ~ *Then turning toward the woman, he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in, she has not ceased to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven - for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little." And he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." Then those who were at the table with him began to say among themselves. "Who is this to forgive sins?" And he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."*

Written by: Ninfa Flewitt

Women, especially known sinful women were judged harshly by all. Especially the Pharisees with whom he had been invited to share a meal. The woman showed love and kindness to Jesus when the host had not offered Him the kindness one offers a guest. Jesus forgave her sins, of which there were many.

Reflection: How many sins have we committed? How many have we forgiven? Jesus said he who forgives little, loves little. How well do we love? Let us pray to love much, forgive more so that we may go in peace knowing that our sins are forgiven.

Prayer: God help us to forgive more, to love more, so that we may be at peace.
Amen



Day 13 - Tuesday, March 18, 2025

Scripture: John 4:4-26~ *He had to go through Samaria on the way. Eventually he came to the Samaritan village of Sychar, near the field that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there; and Jesus, tired from the long walk, sat wearily beside the well about noontime. Soon a Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Please give me a drink." He was alone at the time because his disciples had gone into the village to buy some food. The woman was surprised, for Jews refuse to have anything to do with Samaritans. She said to Jesus, "You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman. Why are you asking me for a drink?" Jesus replied, "If you only knew the gift God has for you and who you are speaking to, you would ask me, and I would give you living water." "But sir, you don't have a rope or a bucket," she said, "and this well is very deep. Where would you get this living water?"*

And besides, do you think you're greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us this well? How can you offer better water than he and his sons and his animals enjoyed?" Jesus replied, "Anyone who drinks this water will soon become thirsty again. But those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life." "Please, sir," the woman said, "give me this water! Then I'll never be thirsty again, and I won't have to come here to get water." "Go and get your husband," Jesus told her. "I don't have a husband," the woman replied. Jesus said, "You're right! You don't have a husband—for you have had five husbands, and you aren't even married to the man you're living with now. You certainly spoke the truth!" "Sir," the woman said, "you must be a prophet. So tell me, why is it that you Jews insist that Jerusalem is the only place of worship, while we Samaritans claim it is here at Mount Gerizim, where our ancestors worshiped?" Jesus replied, "Believe me, dear woman, the time is coming when it will no longer matter whether you worship the Father on this mountain or in Jerusalem. You Samaritans know very little about the one you worship, while we Jews know all about him, for salvation comes through the Jews. But the time is coming—indeed it's here now—when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The Father is looking for those who will worship him that way. For God is Spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth." The woman said, "I know the Messiah is coming—the one who is called Christ. When he comes, he will explain everything to us." Then Jesus told her, "I AM the Messiah!"

Written by: Tonya Frantz

I've always been drawn to the story where Jesus goes to a Samaritan woman, one who would have been considered less than. He seeks her out at Jacob's well in the hottest part of the day to ask her for a drink of water.

Jesus knew where she would be. She was hiding from others and believing she wasn't worthy or enough. A woman would only go to the well in the hottest part of the day if she was avoiding being around other women. But still, Jesus goes to her! He knew exactly where she would be and why she was there.

Jesus comes to us just where we are. He loves us enough to seek us out in our hiding places. Jesus saw the Samaritan woman hurting and hiding and he came to her. He told her she was worthy, and he offered her living water. Jesus sees her! Jesus sees all that she is and He tells her she is deserving of all He has to offer her. He tells her that ALL will be included in the Kingdom of God and ALL are worthy to receive it.

Jesus tells her that true worshippers worship in Spirit and Truth, and the Father looks for those who worship in this way. To worship in Spirit is to worship God with our true heart, not just go through the motions but offer God our full selves. To worship in Truth is to align our actions with those of Jesus. The primary way we align ourselves with Jesus is to study the Bible and especially the words of Jesus. We have to gain understanding of how Jesus lived so that we can do our best to model Him.

Reflection: Are you hiding from God? Is there some area of your life you haven't fully given over to Him? Are you seeking to worship God with your whole heart? Are you working to understand Jesus so that you might model your life after his? What is one thing you can do this week where you can be the hands and feet of Jesus?

Prayer: Lord, I am thankful that you are a God who loves me exactly as I am and that you will seek to find me even when I might be hiding some or all of myself from you. Help me to seek you with my whole heart. Direct me in the path you have for me and reveal to me the ways in which I can better live my life in the footsteps of Jesus. Amen.



Day 14 - Wednesday, March 19, 2025

Scripture: Luke 7:36-39, Luke 8:1-3 - *When one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them. When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner."*

Written by: Kylie Campbell

I have so many questions when I read the Luke 7:36-38 story. I just imagine the woman hearing the town gossip that Jesus was in town and was eating with a Pharisee. What was going through her mind? Was she hoping for a second chance? Did she even know if they would let her in once she arrived? What made her think to grab a jar filled with expensive perfume? And WHY of all things, did she use her hair to wipe her tears off of his feet and place perfume on them?

As a woman, I can only imagine the shame she must have felt. The ridicule she must have faced day in and day out as people in the town whispered about her or the more vicious people shouted things or even spat her way. Clearly the Pharisee, someone considered high up with authority, even knew who the woman was and what her sin was. The woman, who isn't even named, somehow made it into the house and ended up at Jesus' feet. And she started crying. Maybe she was embarrassed she had gotten his feet wet. Maybe she saw an opportunity to clean the dust off of his feet. Maybe she thought - this is all I have to offer and began placing perfume on his feet.

Jesus saw her. He saw a woman who risked entering the home of a Pharisee. He saw a woman who was sorry for what she had done. He saw a woman who had value. He saw her.

And guess what, my friend? Jesus sees you too. And he invites you into the places you don't feel invited or comfortable. And he sees your sins. And he sees your tears. And he's waiting for you and your tears. Jesus sees you. And he forgives you.

Reflection: Help us remember that no matter what we have gone through or where we are, Jesus sees us. And he loves us.

Prayer: Dear God, help us take risks for you, to love you with our whole hearts, and to remember that you see us. Amen.



Day 15 - Thursday, March 20, 2025

Scripture: Romans 8:1 - *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

Written by: Patty Ruth

When Jesus touches our life, it can dramatically change it. Jesus knows our deepest needs and the desires of our heart. Today's scriptures, from Luke, describes how various women reacted when they encountered Jesus. The women were unique in their individual circumstances, but all were carrying sin, and other human frailties. The women were filled with such gratitude and pure joy after being freed from all those burdens, their lives had been changed. Each one humbled themselves and worshiped their savior. These ladies became disciples and were devoted followers of Jesus, giving all that they had to give.

I have been reminded from time to time, that as women, we are called to serve. Historically, women have banded together to support church goals and projects. I have heard pastors remark, with pride and a hint of fear, that the women of the church are a force to be reckoned with when on a mission for Christ. They are ready and willing to do whatever is necessary to support the church's outreach projects. These disciples aid those that are hungry, hopeless, and lost. They are lead and directed by His love. "What can I do to help you?" is the most precious response to those who find themselves in traumatic situations, no matter how large or small they be.

Jesus has embraced us all by his love and grace, comforts us in our sorrow, heals and forgives our sins, and has given us the gift of eternal life. We too, possess a driving force, to share our love of Jesus. Take time to reflect, "Has my life changed, and have I shared the love and grace bestowed on me?"

Reflection: Help us remember that we have a driving force within us to share the love of Jesus.

Prayer: Dear Lord Jesus, forgive us, we pray, when we have not acknowledged our gratitude for all you have done and are doing in our lives. Let your light shine through us. Thank you, for your blessings poured out for all. Amen



Day 16 - Friday, March 21, 2025

Scripture: Luke 7: 11-17 - *Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went along with him. As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out—the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her. When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, “Don’t cry.” Then he went up and touched the bier they were carrying him on, and the bearers stood still. He said, “Young man, I say to you, get up!” The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother. They were all filled with awe and praised God. “A great prophet has appeared among us,” they said. “God has come to help his people.” This news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding country.*

Written by: Jessica Wasson

Goodness this scripture just punches me in the gut. You have a woman who has lost her only son. We know she is also a widow so we can surmise she might now be alone in the world. Certainly without a man - which in the culture at the time was no small

thing. Jesus immediately takes it to heart and encourages her to not cry. And I know in our modern times telling a woman not to cry rarely turns out well. But Jesus was expressing compassion for her deep grief and reassuring her that he was there to help. The main thing I think we take away from this interaction is Jesus' empathy.

Jesus repeatedly shows how compassionate and empathetic he is, particularly in regards to women. There are countless examples of him treating women like equals and contemporaries. He refused to treat them like property or anything less than his disciples, worthy of all of his love. You think we might learn a thing or two from this? In a society that routinely tries to tell us that certain people are not worthy because of xyz, we know that all are worthy of Jesus' love and compassion - and of ours!

Reflection: Help us remember that all people are worthy of Jesus' love, not just some.

Prayer: Dear God, help us to remember that Jesus calls all and loves all, no matter their position in life. Amen



Day 17 - Saturday, March 22, 2025

Scripture: Luke 7:36-39 - *One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to eat with him, and when he went into the Pharisee's house he reclined to dine. And a woman in the city who was a sinner, having learned that he was eating in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster jar of ointment. She stood behind him at his feet, weeping, and began to bathe his feet with her tears and to dry them with her hair, kissing his feet and anointing them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw it, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what kind of woman this is who is touching him, that she is a sinner."*

Written by: Kelsey Giddens

Lent is a season of repentance, reflection, and renewal—a time to realign our hearts with Jesus. As we journey toward the cross, we are invited to see the world through His eyes.

In *Luke 7*, a woman labeled as a sinner enters Simon the Pharisee's house, weeping at Jesus' feet. While Simon sees the woman's failure, Jesus sees her faith. Instead of shame, Jesus offers her grace. He turns to Simon and asks, "**Do you see this woman?**"

Throughout *Luke's Gospel*, Jesus consistently uplifts and includes women-Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna (*Luke 8:1-3*), and Mary of Bethany (*Luke 10*). These women were not just spectators; they followed Jesus, financially supported His ministry, and were entrusted with proclaiming His resurrection (*Luke 24:10*). Jesus welcomed women into His mission at a time when society often silenced them. In a world that often ignored or diminished them, Jesus gave them dignity, calling them into discipleship and purpose.

Lent calls us to examine our own vision. Do we see others as Jesus does? Are we extending grace, or are we clinging to judgment? As we prepare for Easter, may we open our hearts to love as Christ loves-welcoming the outsider, offering mercy, and truly seeing those the world overlooks.

Reflection: As you journey through Lent, who in your life do you need to see with fresh eyes? How can you extend the grace of Jesus to someone who may feel unseen?

Prayer: Jesus, in this season of Lent, soften my heart and sharpen my vision. Help me to see others with Your eyes-offering love, not judgment; mercy, not condemnation. Transform me so that I may reflect Your grace. Amen.



Day 18 - Sunday, March 23, 2025

There is no devotion on Sunday. Instead we recommend that you rest, reflect on the week and regroup as you prepare for the week to come.



Week 3 Theme: Parables from the Underside

Day 19 - Monday, March 24, 2025

Scripture: Luke 11:1-4 *He was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." So he said to them, "When you pray, say:*

Father, may your name be revered as holy.

May your kingdom come.

Give us each day our daily bread.

And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us.

And do not bring us to the time of trial."

Written by: Melissa Ribinskas

N.T. Wright wrote in *Simply Jesus*:

"As part of his campaign, Jesus told stories.... They were, for the most part, not simply 'illustrations,' that is, preachers' tricks to decorate an abstract thought or complicated teaching. If anything, they were the opposite. Jesus' stories are designed to tease, to clothe the shocking and revolutionary message about God's Kingdom in garb that would leave the listeners wondering, trying to think it out. They were stories that eventually caused Israel's leaders to decode his rich message in such a way as to frame a charge against him, either of blasphemy, sedition, or 'leading the people astray.' Whatever the parables are, they are not, as children are sometimes taught in Sunday school, 'earthly stories with heavenly meaning.' Rather, they are expressions of Jesus' shocking announcement that God's Kingdom was arriving on earth as in heaven."

This prayer Jesus teaches calls for us to daily tell God, "may your kingdom come". The Message interprets this petition as "set the world right" which is interesting as so often we refer to God's kingdom as upside down. How might God's kingdom come? How might the world be set right? Jesus' parables help us answer these questions, not directly, but with space to dwell on them. Leaving pictures incomplete or conclusions unspoken or unwritten actually helps your brain continue to engage with the material in new and creative ways.

Jesus' parables help us see how God's kingdom is here when we help our neighbors, here when we care for our children, here when we persistently ask for what we need - both the literal and metaphorical daily bread.

Reflection: As we dwell in the parables this week, ask:
How is this parable about Jesus and his purpose of bringing God's kingdom?

Prayer: Borrow from The Message for a breath prayer today.

Breathe in : Reveal who you are

Breathe out: Set the world right.



Day 20 - Tuesday, March 25, 2025

Scripture: Matthew 13:31-32 - *He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches."*

Written by: Jessica Wasson

The parable of the mustard seed has always been one of my favorites. It appears in the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. Do you know how incredibly small a mustard seed is? I recently made mustard seed necklaces for an event at church and I had to use tweezers to handle the seeds. And still ended up with seeds all over our kitchen! But that tiny seed grows into this majestic tree:

The scripture tells us that the mustard seed that grows into this exceptional tree is like the kingdom of God. It might have started out small but with care and nurture it grew and can continue to grow here on earth. Can you imagine the kingdom of God growing that exponentially? I can!



But this kind of growth doesn't happen by accident. It requires nourishment and light. For the kingdom of God to continue to grow we must also nourish it. How? By loving people where they are, by being the light of Christ in a broken world, by refusing to let the discouragement of the world keep us from doing the work of God in it.

Reflection: How can we grow our faith more? What can we do to grow the kingdom of God here on earth?

Prayer: Dear God help us to be like the mustard tree - help us grow strong from even the smallest start. Amen



Day 21 - Wednesday, March 26, 2025

Scripture: Luke 18:13 - *But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'*

Written by: Albert Erslund

We humans can easily fall into sin by thought, word, or deed, choosing to act without focusing on God. Once we yield to temptation, it is not possible to hit an undo, unsend, or delete button. Once sin is realized, we stand before God pleading for mercy.

Reflection: If we are truly sorry for our sin and plead for God to be merciful to us, will we consciously repeat this sin?

Prayer: Dear God, have mercy on me, a sinner. I am sorry that I sinned and I ask for you to forgive me and help me to truly repent. Help me to resist temptation. Amen.



Day 22 - Thursday, March 27, 2025

Scripture: Luke 18:9-14 - *To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’ “But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’ “I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”*

Written by: Kylie Campbell

“For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

We have a man here in our church who likes to stay behind the scenes. I’ve seen him digging through mud to find the irrigation problem (more than once). I’ve seen him on his hands and knees seeing if he could fix the air conditioner or the heater. He’s been up on ladders fixing lights just because he passed by and saw that it needed to be done. He and his incredibly sweet wife bring their grandson to youth, even when he maybe doesn’t always want to come. And I wouldn’t want to embarrass him by sharing his name, but he sure does help with the church finances a lot.

If you happen to see him, please make sure to tell him “thank you” for all he does around the church both seen and unseen. Don’t make a huge fuss, just quietly acknowledge his awesomeness. He’s so humble, he doesn’t want to be exalted. And after you have thanked him, be sure to look around you and think about who is quietly serving behind the scenes. Who needs to be thanked today?

Reflection: Think about who works behind the scenes that can be thanked today.

Prayer: Dear God, help me be more aware of those who do your work quietly but diligently and behind the scenes so that I can acknowledge their work in your kingdom. Amen.



Day 23 - Friday, March 28, 2025

Scripture: Luke 15:3-8 - *Then Jesus told them this parable: “Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn’t he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’ I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.*

Written by: Reverend Kyland Dobbins

One day when I was walking in the worship center (sanctuary) of our church, I saw several items on the audio-visual tech booth. I saw a Bible, a hat, a set of keys, and a pair of glasses. Wanting to clean up the area, I took them and placed them in the office with the other lost items that eventually made their way to the main office. And as I looked at the items in the lost-and-found, a thought occurred to me that our lives are much like this when we lose valuable items from time-to-time. We lose valuable things from time-to-time like our hope, our faith in God, our sense of purpose, our connection to others, and so on.

This is what Jesus meant when he told the parable of the lost sheep, lost coin, and lost son in Luke 15:1-32. And usually, we go straight to the parable of the lost son, or the Prodigal Son, but these passages or parables go together. Jesus is showing us what the kingdom of God is like and what God does for us to reclaim us unto himself. Jesus depicts God in ways that may make some of us uncomfortable too—God as a shepherd (maybe not so much here), but God as a woman searching (possibly on hands and

knees) and sweeping is unnerving, and as a father who seems to have no standards for giving inheritances or pride as he runs to his returning son.

Jesus is showing the limitless lengths God will go to save you...the relentless reconnaissance God will go to find you...and the gargantuan grace God has for you even when you have messed up. That is the glorious nature of the kingdom of God and God's love manifested for you! Now here is the challenge: those of us who are citizens of the kingdom of God are called to reflect the faithful actions of God to help others find what has been lost in their lives—their faith, their peace, their love, their connection to others, and maybe even their very souls.

Reflection: How can we find what has been lost in our lives as well as help others find what has been lost in theirs?

Prayer: Dear God, help us to remember we are never truly lost and that you will go to great lengths to bring us home to your presence.



Day 24 - Saturday, March 29, 2025

Scripture: John 11: 38:44~ *Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. "Take away the stone," he said. "But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days." Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me." When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."*

Written by: Reverend Alan Clark

My name is Lazarus. My name is, "God has helped." You might also know me as Alan, but I promise you that my life is a testament to how God has helped me and others.

In the parables in the Gospel of Luke, we see Jesus teaching about the rightness of helping the poor, the outcast, those in need. And one of the themes in these parables is our inclination to try to delineate who we are supposed to help and who not to help. And we see Jesus' condemnation of this. God has not helped me because I

deserved it or fit the description of one deserving help. God helps because God is God, and loves us and is always willing to receive us, accept us and take care of us. In fact, the argument can be made that the worse off a person is, the closer God comes to them, the deeper the Divine love that is shown.

Now, the need around us is seemingly infinite and overwhelming. But what we can do, we are called to do. I am reminded of the story of the person walking along the seashore that is scattered with hundreds of starfish. They pick one up and throw it back in the ocean, then pick up another and throw it in. Someone sees them and asks, “Why are you doing this? You’ll never get them all back in. What difference does it make?” And the reply was, as they picked up another starfish and threw it in, “It makes a difference to that one.”

You can make a difference. You can be an agent of God’s love. You can change someone’s name to Lazarus.

Reflection: In what ways can you change someone’s name to Lazarus?

Prayer: Dear God, may we always see the best in people and work to improve even one person’s life. Amen



Day 25 - Sunday, March 30, 2025

There is no devotion on Sunday. Instead we recommend that you rest, reflect on the week and regroup as you prepare for the week to come.



Week 4 Theme: On the Journey to Jerusalem

Day 26: Monday, March 31, 2025

Scripture: *“But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.”* - Matthew 5:44

Written by: Suzy Morgan

So many things in God’s Word seem counterintuitive. How can the last be first? How can the meek inherit the Earth? And how can we possibly be expected to bless those who curse us, do good to those who hate us . . . and pray for those who persecute us?

The secret lies in viewing ourselves and those around us through honest Kingdom glasses.

Take a moment to consider the best thing you’ve ever done. Perhaps you served as a volunteer counselor at a children’s camp. Maybe you spent a good amount of time serving at a food pantry. You might have made a sizable donation to a ministry.

Even on your best day, the issue of sin still remains, and it is that sin that levels the playing field for all people. We stand poised for judgement - as do those who curse, hate, and persecute us.

The sin that separates us from God is a disease only remedied by the death and resurrection of Jesus. It is the hope we have in Him - and the acknowledgement of our full dependence on His saving grace - that changes us from the angry Pharisee to the humble servant.

When we truly realize what Jesus has done for us, and for ALL people, obedience will flow from a heart of gratitude. And it is that gratitude that leads us to love people - even those who persecute us.

Reflection: Consider someone in your life who has brought you pain or trouble. You may have already forgiven that person, but, today, *with intention...pray for them.*

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me forgive as You have forgiven me.



Day 27 - Tuesday, April 1, 2025

Scripture: Luke 1:52-53 - *“He has brought down rulers from their thrones, but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things, but has sent the rich away empty.”*

Written by: Maria Reed

When hoping for long-term success with projects, careers, and other important stations in life, modern-day success gurus often advise us to, “begin with the end in mind”. In other words, visualize what success looks like, and back into it.

Luke 1: 52-53 is God’s attempt to show us what success for Christ will look like even before he is born. This scripture is considered a part of Mary’s Song - the insights God has given Mary as she prepares to be the mother of our earthly Christ. Mary knows her God to be one who isn’t focused on the mighty power that comes from position (like the earthly pharaohs and kings of the time). She also knows that her God looks to fill the hungry. That’s true for those who hunger for a relationship with Him as well as those who hunger for actual food. Through this scripture, Mary is confirming what she knows the priorities to be. She is preparing for Christ’s life by beginning with the end in mind. It’s amazing! God is setting the stage before He comes to earth. The stage of humility and nourishment...justice and compassion.

Reflection: As we celebrate the season of Lent, what can we do to have a clear picture of what Christ has in mind for us in our relationship with Him? How can we begin the next chapter of our lives with the end in mind? How can we emulate what Mary did when she announced what is good and right about her God? How can justice and compassion be the central goal now as we think about the end of our lives?

Prayer: Dear God, help us be more mindful of our relationship with you. Help us to be more compassionate as we interact with all.



Day 28 - Wednesday, April 2, 2025

Scripture: Luke 9:51-53 - *As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem.*

Written by: Kylie Campbell

Let's do a little deep dive into the basics of this passage.
Why were Samaritans despised in the Bible?

In short, the Samaritans built their own temple which the Jews considered pagan. The feud grew, and by the time of Christ, the Jews hated the Samaritans so much they crossed the Jordan river rather than travel through Samaria.

Back to the passage from Luke 9:51-53.

So. Let me get this straight. Jesus. Jesus. The Messiah. The son of God. Sent messengers ahead to the Samaritan village to let the people know he was coming. So they could be ready for him. For his message. To welcome him. Because he was Jesus.

BUT because they knew who he was going to see next, they didn't welcome him or greet him.

Ooof. Goodness y'all. I think if we are truly honest with ourselves, we know we can be that petty. We have thought to ourselves "if that person is friends with them then they couldn't possibly be friends with me." Harrumph.

We live in a world where we encounter our own version of Samaritans on a daily basis. People we don't agree with. People with agendas different from our own. People who we try to tune out, ignore, and often belittle to others.

Reflection: Only you can answer: who are the Samaritans in your life? Who have you ruled out? And why? And how can you begin to pray for them and over your feelings for them? And - who believes you are a Samaritan? Who avoids you? And why? And how can you begin to pray in a way that changes your heart?

Prayer: Dear God help us to recognize the Samaritans in our life and be more welcoming to them.



Day 29 - Thursday, April 3, 2025

Scripture: Luke 17:21 - *Don't you see? God's kingdom is already among you*

Written by: Pastor Alan Clark

When we pray the Lord's Prayer, we pray for God's kingdom to come. Sometimes, at this point in the prayer, I let my imagination picture a world in which God's kingdom is

complete. I imagine all the problems that would disappear, and the suffering that would be no more, and how it would be to dwell together in peace. It's a beautiful picture.

But Jesus is telling us that the Kingdom of God is both on its way and is already here. It's both future and present. How can that be? And then I look in the faces of the people of our congregation, and see the loving, caring people that you are. I look into the bright eyes of the children who come on Wednesdays, and the Kingdom is very recognizable and very present. God is bringing the Kingdom closer each day. Nothing can stop it. All our blunders and ill intents can't stop it. Let us pray for eyes to see and ears to hear the signs of the Kingdom. Let us humbly offer ourselves to God, to participate in bringing about God's Kingdom. We have a part to do, serving others in humble ways. Let us wake up and see God at work in our lives and in our world.

Reflection: How can we be on the lookout for signs of the Kingdom here on earth? How can we do our part to usher in the Kingdom?

Prayer: Dear God, help us to be more aware of the Kingdom here on earth. Show us the way to help usher it in.



Day 30 - Friday, April 4, 2025

Scripture: Hebrews 4:16 - *Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

Written by: Jessica Wasson

When Jesus tells the story of the good Samaritan, one of his main points is that of mercy. He encourages his listeners to go and show mercy that what was shown by the good Samaritan. Mercy is an important scriptural topic. In the New American Bible Revised Edition of the bible, the word mercy appears 296 times in the Old Testament and 43 times in the New Testament. Clearly it is a topic God wants us to not overlook.

What is mercy? Webster defines mercy as "compassion or forbearance shown especially to an offender or to one subject to one's power" and "a blessing that is an act of divine favor or compassion." Compassion. I don't think I came close to understanding mercy and compassion until I had kids. I'm sure I still don't understand God's mercy towards us but having children has helped broaden my understanding. My children mean the world to me. And even when they mess up big I love them and

want to be compassionate toward them, even when I'm so mad I can't see straight. I know that they are still learning and that corrections are better received when given in mercy.

I like to think that's how God sees us. His children, still prone to messing up ALL THE TIME. But still able to learn. So He shows us mercy we don't deserve and showers us with compassion in various forms. But He also requires we pass that mercy on. Matthew 5 tells us "blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy." So as we receive compassion and mercy from God, we are to show mercy and compassion to others. Which is not always easy. But God never promised an easy walk on this Christian road.

Reflection: How can you show others the same mercy God has shown you?

Prayer: Dear God, may we be merciful to others and exhibit Kingdom compassion toward everyone who crosses our path. Amen



Day 31 - Saturday, April 5, 2025

Scripture: Luke 10: 30-37 - *In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii[a] and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.' "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him. Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."*

Written by: Reverend Kyland Dobbins

Not too long ago when I was living in Fort Worth, I gained some new neighbors—the Millers. When they first moved in, I didn't see them for weeks; I only saw a minivan parked in the driveway. Then after about the 4th-5th week, I saw a friendly face with a smile, and who also looked at me with interest and curiosity. He waved and then I waved back. Then I noticed that he decided to not just wave but to cross the street to

officially meet. I quickly decided that I'd better do the same or else this could be awkward running into the house while he's coming over to meet me. He said, "Hi! I'm Andrew Miller, your new neighbor." And then the rest of the conversation ensued with the typical 'get-to-know-you' type questions—where are you from? What brought you here? Do you have a family? How long have I lived here? What type of work do we do and what organizations we work for? All the niceties. That's expected of 'nice, respectful neighbors.'

But a day or two later, the Millers took it a step further. My doorbell rang and as I opened the door, I saw their entire family on my porch with some freshly baked chocolate chip cookies; I could feel the warmth of them through the canister. Without them saying a word, I was convinced they would be great neighbors and soon I'd call them friends. Andrew's wife, Allison, asked me about things to do in the city and other nearby cities for couples and for kids, and I shared what I knew with enthusiasm. And then to top it all off, later that day, Allison brought over a card with their contact info on it for emergencies and also gave me a handwritten note:

"Dear Kyland, Mlé, Milan, and Laila, thank you so much for taking the time to welcome us into the neighborhood. This was so special for our family. It's such a wonderful neighborhood and it's what we've prayed for. We are looking forward to hanging out with you all again soon. Thanks for all the great tips!"

What's wrong with me? Am I not a Christian? Am I not a pastor? Why didn't I do this for them as new neighbors who moved into the neighborhood, and right across the street...geez, Kyland! This is what I thought to myself.

Maybe I pre-judged the Millers. No, I know I did. They're married and I'm single. I'm black and they're white. I've been in the neighborhood for years and they're new. That's all I could judge them on and it was enough for me not to do what good neighbors should do—be neighborly, be welcoming, and be Christlike.

I know Luke 10 and the parable of the Good Samaritan is fitting here but so is Luke 17:11-19. It's a story about the lepers who encountered Jesus and were changed forever. Verse 12 in the NIV and the CEB versions of the Bible reads, "...ten men who had leprosy or a skin disease". In other words, Jesus didn't label them as lepers but as men who had leprosy. There is a subtle difference. Jesus humanizes them *first*, not categorizes them. He did not prejudge them based on their condition in life, like we often do to others to determine if they are worth our time and consideration.

Jesus humanizes us. He sees us as he sees himself—human. Jesus recognizes the humanity in us first and that alone allows him to see us as “he saw them” (v. 14). It is what leads Jesus to be compassionate towards us because compassion is about seeing God’s spark of divinity within the humanity of others, and then when necessary, seeing the suffering of another. When we do this, then we can put ourselves into their shoes with the holy hope and power of the Holy Spirit to help change their situation for the better.

Reflection: How can we humanize others without judgment? How can we see them through Jesus’ eyes and use the power of the Holy Spirit to help change their situation?

Prayer: Dear God, help us to act merciful more and judge less.



Day 32 - Sunday, April 6, 2025

There is no devotion on Sunday. Instead we recommend that you rest, reflect on the week and regroup as you prepare for the week to come.



Week 5 Theme: The Final Week Leading to Crucifixion

Day 33 - Monday, April 7, 2025

Scripture: Ephesians 4:1-3 - *I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

Written by: Suzy Morgan

If there's anything that is lacking in our World today, it's patience. In our politically charged and increasingly egocentric culture, it's not uncommon to see people absolutely lose their cool - whether at the dinner table with family, on social media, or simply trying to make it through rush hour.

As Christ-followers, we are to reflect the heart of the Father. Throughout the Bible we see the way God has been patient with His people. He gives us time to change course. He makes room for us to struggle with our doubt. And in 2nd Peter 3:9 we read that He is patient toward us, "...not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."

There's no better example of this than the way Jesus dealt with the thief on the cross. With death looming, Jesus was patient with him. As Jesus suffered, nailed to the cross by sin - He made room for one whom society would consider one of the most sinful. And then Jesus did the unthinkable: He promised him paradise.

Reflection: Next time you feel yourself losing your patience, remember that one of the best ways to show the love of Jesus is to be patient. Even in the small things - whether you are stuck behind a slow driver in the passing lane, your food order is incorrect, or your package is late - remember how Jesus has been patient with you. Remember the mercies He continually bestows upon you. And take the opportunity to show that same patience, grace, and mercy to all people.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, You say I can do all things through You Who gives me strength. Fill me with Your presence today, and make me a gentle, humble tool for You to use as I practice patience with all those I encounter.



Day 34 - Tuesday, April 8, 2025

Scripture: Luke 22:26- *But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves.*

Written by: Reverend Alan Clark

It is the final week of Jesus' days on earth. Everything intensifies. He keeps reversing people's concepts of what it means to be his followers. He keeps raising up the outcast, those seen as unworthy, those seen as evil. He draws closer and closer to his death. And then, when he sits down for his final meal with his disciples, and he's trying to make them understand what's about to happen and why, they break out in an argument over who is going to be the greatest among them. Who will have the highest stature, the most recognized position, the most power, the most prestige. I have to think that Jesus must have been so frustrated with them at this point. So what does he tell them? "The greatest among you must become like a person of lower status and the leader like a servant" (Luke 22: 26).

This is not the way the world works. If you want power, you align yourself with powerful people and you wield your power to gain even more power and control. But not so in the Kingdom of God. You don't seek to get your way; you seek to serve the way others need. You don't seek power but instead you give up power, give up control, and in that way you will find ways to truly help others. In the Kingdom, it's what you give up that opens the door to truly being a follower of this Suffering Servant named Jesus.

Reflection: How can we be more like Jesus and less like the world that tells us that power is everything?

Prayer: Dear God, guide us into a life with you that is void of chasing power. Amen.



Day 35 - Wednesday, April 9, 2025

Scripture: Luke 19:9 - *Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham.*

Written by: Jenika Culley

A person will sin in their life and at the time may not realize it being big, small, or how our action affects others. Though others may forgive us, it's not until we can forgive ourselves that we can be free from the burden we may have caused. When

the light of Jesus Christ lit your soul, did you care to reflect and be right with Jesus Christ?

Did you give up and walk away? Or did you sacrifice your sins to have Jesus Christ in your life? Zacchaeus shows us that by confessing our sin and making right of it, the Lord will be there to fill our soul with forgiveness and love.

Reflection: Do you give up? Or do you sacrifice?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, hear my prayer as we begin this Lenten journey with you. Grant me pardon from my past sins and keep me from temptation, so that I may grow in your grace. In Jesus name, Amen.



Day 36 - Thursday, April 10, 2025

Scripture: Matthew 19:14 - *Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.*

Written by: Kylie Campbell

“Love one another. Love one another. Love one another. That’s what people should do.”

- Song written by Amelia Ruth, Age 4

We have the sweetest girl in our church family. She’s eight years old, is missing half of her baby teeth and has a toothy gapped smile, literally has a pep in her step, and is always willing to give the biggest hug. I’m going to take parental privilege and brag on my daughter, Amelia Ruth.

When she was little bitty she would run as fast as her legs would carry her, and jump into people’s arms and squish them as hard as she possibly could. Now that she’s older we often have to remind her “gentle hugs” because she’s so strong.

Amelia is the kiddo who can have a new best friend five minutes after arriving at a playground full of kiddos where she knew no one. She’s the kiddo who can somehow befriend a little girl and play hide-and-go-seek in a thrift store when they don’t even speak the same spoken language. She’s the kiddo who is first in line to hug you if she sees or feels you’re sad.

Amelia is the kiddo who likes to pack her treasures into a bag and take them to church with a specific friend in mind to give each prized possession, a story for why she thought of them, and extra for anyone else who might be around so they aren't forgotten or left out. She helps lead Family Style Worship on Saturday nights (sometimes from the stage) and knows that leading isn't about her; it's about focusing on God and helping others to focus on God too.

In Matthew 19:14 the scripture reads "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." If I had a week to live, the message would be to look to the children. Look to the Amelias. Look to the givers, the helpers, the fighters for others, the joy spreaders, the love knows no limits.

Reflection: Help us look for the Ameilas in our life - for the helpers, for the ones who spread joy.

Prayer: Dear God, help us all to be more like Amelia every day. Help us spread love and joy like wildflowers. Amen



Day 37 - Friday, April 11, 2025

Scripture: Matthew 27:32-34 - *As they were going out, they met a man from Cyrene, named Simon, and they forced him to carry the cross. 33 They came to a place called Golgotha (which means "the place of the skull"). 34 There they offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with gall; but after tasting it, he refused to drink it.*

Written by: Ted Streck

It is easy for us to be magnanimous about what we would do if we knew we were dying, but it is something else to see what really happens and this devotional is about four incredible children of God that did just that.

Carroll, Tad, Diane and Benita, all never met each other as a group. Carroll and Benita were sister in-laws and Tad and Diane knew each other in the town they lived in. They were, however, brothers and sisters in Christ. They had something else in common- they bore the burden of cancer. A burden that would eventually claim each of their lives. But like Simon the Cyrene, they all bore their burden while honoring Jesus. And during their illness they got to a point where they began refusing food or drink. None of this however deterred any of them from their work of glorifying God.

Carroll was very active in her church, had a beautiful singing voice and a quick sense of humor. She also had an abounding love of Christ and a very deep knowledge of God's Word. Even in her last days she was glorifying God, when accepting visitors, and speaking the truth to them about the Lord and where she prayed they would be in their relationship with Christ.

Tad was an amazing handyman, waiter and extremely loving father. He was active in his daughter's girl scout troop. When he was diagnosed, he reached out to friends and made sure they knew how he felt about them. His last act of love was walking his daughter down the aisle for her wedding, even though it took all the strength he had. At his funeral it was very evident he was led by the Spirit, by the number of people who got up to bear witness about his life, the example he set both during and at the end of his life.

Diane was very active in church, worked with multiple charitable organizations and spent her winters teaching children how to ski. From the moment she was diagnosed, you would have thought that she was the care giver, not the patient. She spent her time praying for others in the hospital, and for the staff. Until she could no longer speak, Diane was glorifying God and sharing the message of his good news.

Benita was a loving mother, the sage of her family and the best seamstress in her community. When you walked into a room that she was in, you felt at peace. She spent time volunteering in her church's children's program and influenced many young lives in her time there. In her final days, Benita would spend time speaking absolute truth about God's love and mercy. She was not the least bit frightened about what was in store for her and was extremely excited about meeting her Savior.

There is a country song called Live like you are dying. It speaks of all the things they would do if they knew they were dying. Carroll, Tad, Diane and Benita all knew they were dying, chose to bear the burden, and refuse to drink the wine of bitterness. They all lived like they were dying...for Christ.

Reflection: How can you live like you are dying? For Christ?

Prayer: Dear God help us to live our life for you in all that we do. Amen



Day 38 - Saturday, April 12, 2025

Scripture: 1 Peter 4:11 - *If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God*

provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

Written by: Jessica Wasson

I think a lot about Jesus' last week on earth. After he asked his father to take the cup from him he says if it is his father's will then he will go to the cross. When I think about the strength of Jesus I also think about one of my closest friends, a sister from another mister if you will. She has battled heart failure for years now but you would never know it. She has a servant's heart and is the first to help out anyone in need. She does it with a smile and never complains that she's tired or not feeling well.

My friend embodies 1 Peter 4:11. She serves with the strength God provides her. She has been handed a hard diagnosis but she doesn't let it keep her down or keep her from what God calls her to do. Just like Jesus on his way to the cross.

If I had one week to live I would point to my sister in Christ - she is who I aspire to be more like, particularly when life throws inevitable curveballs at me.

Reflection: How can we serve with the strength of God, even in challenging times? What would you do if you have one week left on earth to point people to God?

Prayer: Dear God, may we all continue to be your servants here on earth, even in the darkest of times. Amen.



Day 39 - Sunday, April 13, 2025

There is no devotion on Sunday. Instead we recommend that you rest, reflect on the week and regroup as you prepare for the week to come.



Week 6 - Theme: Crucified with the Outlaws

Day 40 - Monday, April 14, 2025

Scripture: Luke 23:43 - *Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."*

Written by: Jessica Wasson

One of my favorite worship songs is *Thief* by Third Day. It is written from the perspective of one of the thieves hanging on the cross next to Jesus. These are the lyrics:

*I am a thief, I am a murderer
Walkin' up this lonely hill
What have I done?
No, I don't remember
And no one knows just how I feel*

And I know that my time is comin' soon

*It's been so long, oh, such a long time
Since I've lived with peace and rest
And now I am here at my destination
And I guess things work for the best*

And I know that My time is comin' soon

*O who is this man, O this man beside
me
That they call the King of the Jews?
No, they don't believe that He's the
Messiah
But somehow, I know that it's true*

*O they laugh at Him in mockery
And beat Him 'til He bleeds*

*O they nail Him to the rugged cross
And raise Him, yeah, they raise Him up
next to me*

*My time has come, I'm slowly fading
But I deserve what I receive
Jesus when You reign Your kingdom
Could Ya please, please remember me?*

*O He looks at me still holdin' on
And the tears fall from His eyes
And He says, "I tell the truth
O today, O you will live with me in
Paradise!"*

*O yeah, yes
And I know that my time, O my time is
comin' soon
Oh, yeah, yes
And I know that my time, O my time is
comin' soon
Yeah, yeah, yeah*

*And I know Paradise, O Paradise
Is comin' soon*

I've loved and listened to this song for longer than I've been married, for longer than my children have been alive and it still gets me every time. How many times have we been convinced we've crossed the line with God, gone too far for Him to possibly

forgive us? Yet here in this song and scripture we see a man hanging on a cross next to Jesus that was offered mercy (there's that word again!). In Jesus' time, crucifixion was used as a form of execution for many crimes, including treason, murder and religious offenses. Tradition holds that the two men hanging on the cross next to Jesus were thieves. We don't know much about either of them, but we know the most important thing - they deserved to be punished according to the law but Jesus offered forgiveness and a spot with Him in the afterlife. So the next time you worry you've gone too far, remember the thief on the cross, the thief that knew his time was coming to an end and yet asked for an was offered forgiveness.

Reflection: Read the lyrics of the song again and meditate on what they mean - try to put yourself in the thief's place. What does it mean to you to be offered forgiveness from God, even when you don't deserve it?

Prayer: Dear God, help us remember that we are never too far gone for your love and forgiveness to find us.



Day 41 - Tuesday, April 15, 2025

Scripture: Galatians 5:14 - *“For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”*

Written by: Suzy Morgan

When we consider that the word “neighbor” includes anyone with whom we come into contact, irrespective of our differences, this can feel like a daunting task.

There's a song we often sing in our Connect Worship service called Build My Life. The chorus of the song includes these words:

*“Show me Who You are
And fill me with Your heart
And lead me in Your love to those around me”*

What a beautiful prayer to pray every day as we face the challenge of loving our neighbors as ourselves! I love how it is structured into three parts:

SHOW: We pray for God to reveal Himself to us - to help us gain a deeper understanding of Who He is and what His will is for our lives.

FILL: We pray that the Holy Spirit will fill us with His gifts, power, and guidance.

LEAD: We pray that God will place people in our path, every day, to whom we can show His love.

Reflection: Take a moment to listen to the song Build My Life by Pat Barrett. As you listen, ask the Lord to do those three things: show, fill, and lead.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we are in a broken world that is lost without You. Place someone in my path today who needs to see Your love in action. Give me boldness to show them that love. Thank You for making me Your hands and Your feet.



Day 42 - Wednesday, April 16, 2025

Scripture: Luke 23:42-43 ~ *“Then he said, Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. Jesus answered him, “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.”*

Written by: Maria Reed

My friend, June, asks herself an interesting question when something new comes up she needs to deal with at work, with the kids, the grandkids, etc. She says, “Do I have the bandwidth to deal with this?” If at all possible, she adjusts, prioritizes, and energizes herself as needed to expand that bandwidth for the important things.

When I read this portion of the love story that is Christ’s crucifixion, I find myself thinking about how Jesus must have felt when he asked himself, “do I have the bandwidth to deal with this?” A criminal hanging next to him is asking for help. It would have been completely understandable had Jesus turned away. After all, he has been beaten, spit upon, bones broken, bloodied, humiliated, and nailed to a cross! As hard as he had already worked to help people understand the love he has for every person, he is willing to work harder still from the cross to pull another close to him. There are no limits to Jesus’ bandwidth. It’s automatic.

The criminal on the cross was much like you and me. We see all that Christ went through on earth, yet we still ask for more. More help. More understanding. More forgiveness.

One of the amazing things about Christ is that He always has the bandwidth! He is there ready, even while hanging on a cross, to look at us and offer assurance that He

forgives us of our sin, and we can be with Him in paradise, if we recognize Him and the love he has for us.

Reflection: How can you remind yourself that Jesus always has the bandwidth? For whatever we need to take to him?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, please help us charge on when it's hard. Help us find the capacity to love like You -- even when we are tired, disappointed, overwhelmed, hurt. Please increase our bandwidth! We love you, Lord.



Day 43 - Thursday, April 17, 2025

Scripture: Luke 23: 34 - *Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.*

Written by: Jessica Wasson

I can't even fathom this moment, and I imagine if we are honest few of us can. Jesus, hanging on the cross, having been judged and punished as a completely innocent man, is about to breathe his last. He has been tempted by the devil, beaten, sneered at, mocked, and more by those he came to save. Yet as life is draining from his earthly body he asks his father in heaven to forgive those same people who put him through unimaginable pain. Can you even imagine? No really, can you? Because I can't. Jesus knew the ones who put him on the cross didn't deserve forgiveness, he asked for it anyway. Jesus knew those who mocked him, who tempted him to show his power didn't deserve forgiveness, he asked for it anyway. Jesus knew he was an innocent man, unjustly put to death by the powers that be and that they didn't deserve forgiveness, he asked for it anyway.

I think so many times it is difficult for us to forgive someone who sees nothing wrong with their actions. The Pharisees, the people who cheered on Jesus' crucifixion somehow believed they were in the right. Now, this is certainly a drastic example but we can still learn from it and apply it to our own lives. Jesus didn't wait for any of these people to show repentance or to ask for forgiveness. He interceded on their behalf, pleading with God that they did not know what they did. We also can intercede with God even when someone hasn't seen the wrong in their actions. Because certainly we have been on the receiving end of that forgiveness that only God can grant.

Reflection: Jesus intercedes for all those who crucified him - what does that mean to you? How can we learn from this interceding and how can we do the same?

Prayer: Dear God help us be more like Jesus and forgive even before that forgiveness is asked for.



Day 44 - Friday, April 18, 2025

Scripture: Psalm 118 - Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever. Let Israel say: "His love endures forever." Let the house of Aaron say: "His love endures forever." Let those who fear the LORD say: "His love endures forever." When hard pressed, I cried to the LORD; he brought me into a spacious place. The LORD is with me; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me? The LORD is with me; he is my helper. I look in triumph on my enemies. It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in humans. It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in princes. All the nations surrounded me, but in the name of the LORD I cut them down. They surrounded me on every side, but in the name of the LORD I cut them down. They swarmed around me like bees, but they were consumed as quickly as burning thorns; in the name of the LORD I cut them down. I was pushed back and about to fall, but the LORD helped me. The LORD is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation. Shouts of joy and victory resound in the tents of the righteous: "The LORD's right hand has done mighty things! The LORD's right hand is lifted high; the LORD's right hand has done mighty things!" I will not die but live, and will proclaim what the LORD has done. The LORD has chastened me severely, but he has not given me over to death. Open for me the gates of the righteous; I will enter and give thanks to the LORD. This is the gate of the LORD through which the righteous may enter. I will give you thanks, for you answered me; you have become my salvation. The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; the LORD has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes. The LORD has done it this very day; let us rejoice today and be glad. LORD, save us! LORD, grant us success! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD. From the house of the LORD we bless you. The LORD is God, and he has made his light shine on us. With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession up to the horns of the altar. You are my God, and I will praise you; you are my God, and I will exalt you. Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.

Written by: Reverend Alan Clark

There is much - too much, really - to ponder about the crucifixion of Jesus. For hundreds of years, Christians have meditated on this one day of Jesus' life as a way of

deepening their devotion and their understanding of his call to discipleship. I am going to use a quote from Adam Hamilton here for the purposes of this devotion. He says, "Suffering is not God's plan, nor does it happen at God's initiative.... But when these things do happen, God acts both to strengthen us and, ultimately, to redeem our suffering" (p. 115).

I can testify to the truth of this. In my life and in the lives of others, I have seen both facets of this truth. God is with us all the time, and does not fail to offer us comfort, support and guidance in times of trial. In the darkest of our nights, God comes closer to us than ever before. We still suffer and hurt and get angry and cry out for help. Every word is heard, every emotion is equally felt by our Lord. And then, ultimately, God redeems this suffering and uses it to shape a better future for us and others. This can only happen by the Hand of God.

Jesus moved through the crucifixion and then arrived at the resurrection. That is the story of creation - that life finally triumphs over death and light over darkness. "This is God's doing and it is marvelous in our eyes" (Psalm 118:23).

Reflection: We must not forget that God is here to strengthen us even in our suffering. How can we hold on to this truth?

Prayer: Dear God help us listen to your guidance in all things. Amen.



Day 45 - Saturday, April 19, 2025

Scripture: John 19:38-42 - *Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jewish leaders. With Pilate's permission, he came and took the body away. He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. [a] Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs. At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid. Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.*

Written by: Jessica Wasson

The burial of Jesus is described in all four of the gospels, but with different details in each. I just love this version from John. Jesus' body is treated with great care by

those who loved him. Joseph asks for permission to take Jesus' body and prepare it for burial. These disciples still didn't understand what was to come, that Jesus would overcome this dead body and be resurrected into life eternal. The custom of the Jewish people was to wrap bodies in linen strips and utilize spices to mask the odor of the decomposing body. You see, they fully expected for Jesus' body to stay buried and to decompose. So they treated it with the utmost care as was necessitated by the Jewish culture at the time. The care they showed his body is symbolic of how much they loved and respected him. They knew, even though he was found guilty, that he deserved the utmost respect and honor during his burial.

How many times in our lives have we convinced ourselves that something is dead and will decompose only for it to be resurrected? I've learned with God to never say never and that nothing is ever truly final until he says so. With the power of God that resurrected Jesus, we can also overcome the challenges of this life.

Reflection: What have you declared dead that God might be asking you to resurrect?

Prayer: Dear God, remind us that nothing is truly dead until you say it's dead and that you are capable of resurrecting even those areas in our lives that have been lifeless for a while.



Day 46 - Sunday April 20, 2025 - Happy Easter!!

Scripture: Luke 24:5b - *He is not here, but has risen.*

Written by: Reverend Kyland Dobbins

If a newscaster, like Walter Cronkite, Dan Rather, or Tom Brokaw broke into your regularly scheduled television program to bring you some breaking news, you knew it was important! You and your family needed to pay attention to be in-the-know because this was likely going to affect your life in some way. Well, when God's powerful presence is manifested on earth in your life and mine, it's real breaking news—it interrupts the normally scheduled program of our lives and it changes everything for the better! When there is breaking news from God, nothing is the same anymore...things turn around from what they used to be...the crooked paths become straight...the high places become low...sinners become saints...and all wrongs become right! When God comes on the scene, it's real breaking news and you ought to pay attention to it! And what better breaking news is there than HE IS RISEN?

I imagine that the women disciples reacted like any of us would when they heard this breaking news about Jesus' resurrection. But consider the source: they heard it from the angels who not only told them but showed them the empty tomb. The male disciples certainly didn't believe the women and ran to see for themselves. In that day and age, those disciples had the testimony of angels and an empty grave. What do we have today to believe this life-changing breaking news? We have way more proof today than they did in antiquity.

So here's how I know that Jesus is risen and is alive. The easiest way for anybody to prove Jesus wasn't resurrected is to produce the dead body of Jesus Christ. Can you imagine the eternal victory that Satan and atheists would have against the people of God and The Church? But here's more to consider:

- We have found the Titanic at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean
- We have found the grave King Tutankhamen
- We have found the Terra-cotta Army of the first emperor of China
- We have found the city of Pompeii and all those thousands of years under the ashes
- We have found the skeleton of Lucy, the oldest human bone remains that challenges the Big Bang theory
- We have found a Dead Sea Scrolls
- We've found the Rosetta Stone
- We have found Hitler's hidden bunker
- We have found the ancient city of Troy
- We have even found the remains of the buried city of Jericho

We have found mostly everything in history we wanted to find. But the one thing that remains we have yet to find is the body of Jesus Christ. That would change everything. But we haven't found it. You know why? Because there is no dead body but only a risen, glorified body! Hallelujah!

Reflection: Do you believe Jesus has been resurrected from the dead? How would you prove it to others if they asked with doubt or disbelief in their tone? How do you prove other phenomenal breaking news to others?

