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Wesley United Methodist Church

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2021 Lenten Devotional



Living Like Jesus:
His Virtues Transform Us

WESLEY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

LENTEN WORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Regular Sunday worship schedule:

8:15 a.m. Chapel; 9:30 a.m. Celebrate! Informal Service in Fellowship Hall; 10:45 a.m. Traditional Service in Sanctuary

- February 17** Ash Wednesday
Imposition of Ashes 6:30 p.m.
- February 21** First Sunday of Lent—"Humility"
- February 28** Second Sunday of Lent—"Surrender"
- March 7** Third Sunday of Lent—"Vigilance"
- March 14** Fourth Sunday of Lent—"Patience"
- March 21** Fifth Sunday of Lent—"Fortitude"
- March 28** Passion/Palm Sunday—
9:30—"Obedience", 8:15 & 10:45—"Love"
Beginning of Holy Week
- April 2** Tenebrae Service 6:30 p.m. Sanctuary
"Thankfulness"
- April 4** Easter Sunday
9:30—"Love", 8:15 & 10:45—"Obedience"

Pastor's Lenten Studies

Thursdays 6:00 p.m.
February 25 through March 25

Lenten Sermons and Studies focus on Jesus' virtues and how living like Jesus can transform our lives, based on the book, "The Glorious Pursuit: Becoming Who God Created Us to Be" by Gary Thomas

As we enter into the Lenten season, we have the opportunity to enter into a deeper understanding of ourselves and how we live out our Christian values and where our relationship with God stands. On Ash Wednesday, the distribution of ashes is a physical reminder of the sacrifice made on our behalf and the love of a Father for his children.

Our devotional this Lenten season is about discovering who we are and where our relationship with God stands. Our theme for Lent is based on the book, "The Glorious Pursuit" by Gary Thomas. Through this study, the author will help us to experience Christ in new ways. We will learn that, "when we practice the virtues of Christ, we become who God created us to be and experience Christ in a whole new way." We will examine the lifestyles of Jesus and the way he lived his life and discover the long-term change that we can experience when we follow Jesus.

Some of the entries in the 2021 Devotional are new, others have been taken from Lenten Devotions over the years. It amazes me how even though the themes of some of the past Lenten Seasons may change, the underlying story remains the same; the journey may look a little different from year to year but the destination is the same; the faith shared and life experiences told help to deepen our understanding of the impact of our Christian community and how God weaves his love through our lives and our life experiences; and mostly, the story never grows old – there is something to gain from re-telling and sharing our faith with our fellow believers.

May this devotional help you to deepen your faith and relationship with our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Our Lenten journey begins on Ash Wednesday...

Wednesday, February 17, 2021

2 Corinthians 5:20 b-6:2

“We implore you on Christ’s behalf: be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. As God’s fellow workers we urge you not to receive God’s grace in vain. For he says, ‘In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you. I tell you, now is the time of God’s favor, now is the day of salvation.’”

I find myself at this season wondering where I stand in my relationship with Christ. Am I doing all I can to be the person God intends me to be? Do I spend enough time on prayer? Do I give enough of my time? Do I share the gifts that I have been blessed with? Do I measure up? Or should I be asking—am I giving up the things I need to be giving up to find favor in God’s eyes?

Making the decision to be a follower of Christ is not one to be taken lightly, nor is it one to shy away from. God created us and he knows us. He wants us to live to the full potential that he sees in us and allow him to set the course for our lives. It is difficult to give up control. Our world dictates that “it’s each man for himself”, “you need to take care of number one”, “if you don’t look out for you, no one else will”, etc. But God is telling us that he will take care of us if we just allow him to. That he will direct us in the path that will bring us his glory. Following him will allow us to have blessings beyond this life in his kingdom.

This Lenten season, take time to listen for God’s direction for your life. Maybe he’s calling you to a subtle change or maybe a more drastic change. I am sure that whatever change he has for your life will require you to give up something. Are you willing to let go and let God?

Prayer: Precious Lord, change is hard and giving up control even harder. Allow me to know your peace in giving up control over those things that hold me back from being all I can be as your follower and servant. In Your Loving Son’s name, I pray. Amen.

—Jan Batt, 2017

Thursday, February 18, 2021

Ephesians 6:7-8

“Not in the way of eye service, as men-pleasers, but as servants of Christ doing the will of God from the heart, rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that whatever good any one does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free.”

Take time during Lent to re-evaluate your life to understand whether you have been living in a Christ like fashion every day. If not, this is the time for a change – to improve your life. If you have really been living to the satisfaction of Christ continue to do so.

Prayer: Lord, let our prayers be heard. Help us to grow to be better people. Help us to give and receive love. Help us to appreciate the beauty of the earth. Help us to be healthy. Amen.

—Betty Hesrick, 2008

Friday, February 19, 2021

Psalms 121

“I lift up my eyes to the hills—where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your foot slip—he who watches over you will not slumber; indeed he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord watches over you—The Lord is your shade at your right hand; the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord will keep you from all harm—he will watch over your life; the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.”

What a fulfilling promise that God has made to all of us. The only requirement is to live a righteous Christian existence until He calls us home. This is easier said than done. Our lives are humbled by a sinful posture but God has promised us his grace and forgiveness. Jesus Christ has given us a model to which we can pattern our lives. I pray every day that we can strive toward that righteous existence so that we can receive the reward He has promised.

Prayer: Our Heavenly Father, give us the hope and faith to endure a righteous life on earth so that we may dwell for eternity with you. Amen.

—Rick Hess, 2000

Saturday, February 20, 2020

John 3:16

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

There is something so basic, so simple yet so powerful about this scripture—it sums up everything that God desires of us and the reward that awaits us when we live out our lives in the way God has planned for each of us. We are reminded during Lent to repent, to turn away from those things that draw us away from God and to turn towards God.

The word “repent” comes from the Greek word, *metanoia*, which means to change your mind, or more specifically, to change your soul. John the Baptist preached repeatedly about repentance. He encouraged this re-orienting of our souls because repentance and entering the kingdom go hand in hand.

This turning is more than just a spiritual activity—it is a physical activity as well. We must turn and face God, to seek him and know him, to place our trust in him, and to turn away from those things that hinder us from having a relationship with him. In his book, not a fan, Kyle Idelman asks this question, “Are you a fan or a follower?” He describes a fan as content to sit on the sidelines, to be close enough to get all the benefits, but not so close that it requires sacrifice. A follower on the other hand, is willing to take up his cross daily—to invite Jesus to walk beside him daily—to be willing to love as Jesus loved.

I struggle with this challenge. I want to be a follower but find myself often times being a very enthusiastic fan. How can I change? The answer is simple and requires that I only change the direction of my focus; to re-orient my compass; to turn towards God. If I continually seek His guidance, seek His mercy; go to Him in prayer

and thanksgiving; and strive to live each day with the single focus of loving as Jesus loved and pick up my cross each day and follow Him, then I can honestly say, “I am a follower”.

Prayer: Dear Lord, please forgive me for my wrongdoings. Give me the strength and endurance to pick up my cross daily and live my life according to your plan. In Your Loving Son’s Name, Amen.

—Jan Batt, 2013

First Week of Lent

Sunday, February 21, 2021

Isaiah 40:31

“But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.”

The greatest prophet and evangelist in the Old Testament history of Israel was Isaiah. In the verse above he give’s God’s promise of comfort to all that love God, do good, and believe.

Just as God promised to deliver the Jews from the hands of the Babylonians, we can take comfort that God is there for us, each and every day, fulfilling his promise to us.

You and I need to have faith in God’s constant and everlasting promise of eternal life. We need to remember that God has given us his most priceless and richest blessings. Life in the real world is not always easy for many people around us. As Christians, we need to be a comfort to our fellow man.

You and I can be a blessing in someone’s life. We can comfort them with a kind word, a smile, a pat on the back, a card of encouragement, or a phone call. You can share your life in smoothing the way for those that are having difficult times, those that are weary, those that need hope, and those in despair. We can help them mount up with wings like eagles. In this Easter season, look around you. There is a neighbor, a friend, a co-worker, or maybe someone you

don't even know that needs you. God loves each one of us. Can we do less for those around us? Be a blessing to someone today.

Prayer: Lord you lift us up and give us wings to carry your love in our world. Help us to be mindful of those around us that need to see, to feel, and to know that love. Amen.

—Arden Pacey, 2008

Monday, February 22, 2021

Romans 15:4-6

“For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope. May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Choosing a favorite Bible verse is like going to a salad bar. The choices are many and what we choose depends on the time of day and what has recently occurred.

Today I need patience to know others will do what they have promised. I need steadfastness so I can accomplish what I have said I would do. I need encouragement that what I am doing is helping others.

We remember Christ asking, “Who do they say that I am?” At this season we need to examine our lives and rethink the life of Christ. We remember that he died, “that we may have life and have it more abundantly.”

Let us live each day with patience, steadfastness, encouragement and thankfulness that we have “salad bar” choices. But with one voice we can give praise and honor to our Creator.

Prayer: Loving God, who was able to give us your Son so that we can have life, help us to remember to live each day so you will be praised. Amen

—Gwynne Eickmeyer, 1988

Tuesday, February 23, 2021

Romans 8:28

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose.”

“Some ships sail east, and some sail west, by the selfsame winds that blow. It's the set of the sail and not the gales that determine the way to go!” —Anonymous

We never know where the winds of life will take us. When we have a relationship with our Lord, we can be reassured that he will be traveling that journey with us. When we have faith in His presence in our lives we will have a ‘right attitude’. God has a purpose for our lives and when we love our Lord and strive to live according to his commands, God is working in our lives to fulfill that purpose. This promise is for those who love God and are called by him—those who have received Christ.

Prayer: Lord, guide our lives according to your purpose for us. In your loving Son, Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen

—Jan Batt, 2008

Wednesday, February 24, 2021

Joshua 24:14-15

“So honor the Lord and serve him wholeheartedly. Put away forever the idols of your ancestors worshiped when they lived beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt. Serve the Lord alone. But if you are unwilling to serve the Lord, then choose today whom you will serve. Would you prefer the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates? Or will it be the gods of the Amorites in whose land you now live? But as for me and my family, we will serve the Lord.”

The Lenten season is a great time of year to start fresh and to focus on what is really important in our lives.

There are two sayings that hang on the wall in our home: First, “Keep God in the center and everything will come together.” Second, “For me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” (Joshua 24:15) These two sayings say so much in how we should live our lives and focus on what really matters. Throughout the day, so much

of our time is consumed with work, meetings, household duties, running our children to and from activities, etc. ... It's easy to get our priorities out of whack and to ask, when do we take time for God?

Each of us has so many opportunities throughout the day to let Christ shine through us. Whether it's problem-solving with fellow employees or teaching computers to kindergarteners, we can be an example of Christ through our actions, motions and attitudes.

Prayer: Lord, help us to remember whom we have chosen to serve. And in that right attitude, share your love with others. Amen.

—Pam Steel, 1999

Thursday, February 25, 2021

2 Corinthians 9:8

“And God is able to make all grace abound in you, so that in all things and at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.”

This scripture tells us that as God so generously meets our needs, we should willingly and without reluctance use our God given gifts and talents to help others. God has given us all that we need to be a blessing to others. Only when we trust God completely can we use these gifts to their full potential. We cannot let our fears get in the way of what God calls us to do. We must be ready and willing to hear God's call to serve HIM. We are called to share His grace with others. This scripture reminds us that, “It is more blessed to give than receive.”

Gandhi tells us “to be the change we want to see in this world.” Through God's grace we have all of the gifts and talents to do our part. As Christians we are called to share these gifts with others and to do so generously.

Prayer: God of grace and love, we pray for your guidance in using the gifts you have so generously given to us to help others. Teach us to share these gifts with joy and thanksgiving. Help us to see the need around us and to spread the good news of your love through our actions. Just as you reach out to us, help us to reach out to others, even when to do so takes us out of our comfort zones. Amen.

—Tammy Wood, 2010

Friday, February 26, 2010

Joshua 1:9

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”

We all have times in our lives when we are pulled into a situation that we didn't anticipate. It is easy to be annoyed if it is something that disrupts our agenda or forces us to change our plans. How we react to these unexpected interruptions tells a lot about us. How we respond to the situation often shows our 'true colors' and causes us to take a look at our 'Jesus heart'.

Gary Thomas, in his book, “the Glorious Pursuit”, shares the following experience: “It had been an exhausting week for me, with two or three more hard weeks ahead. I was flying from coast to coast, so I requested an aisle seat. I needed the room to get some work done. ‘Sorry, sir,’ the agent said, ‘all that remain are center seats.’ ‘Are you kidding me? The plane's full?’ ‘Afraid so.’ I sighed as I got in line to board, knowing work would be impossible. I dug a book out of my shoulder bag and found my seat between a fairly big man and an elderly woman. I didn't even have my seat belt on when the woman started talking. ‘Do you live in California?’ ‘No, I was here on business.’ She was probably in her seventies, with a sweet demeanor. The universal grandmother. But I was tired from speaking at several events, and I looked wistfully at the book in my hands. Escape was buried in those pages, but how could I open the cover without being rude? ‘I'm sorry,’ the woman said, perhaps catching my glance. ‘I'm sure you probably want to read.’ I smiled politely and began to crack open my book. ‘I just don't get to talk much,’ she said quietly. ‘Not since my husband died fifteen years ago.’ Her words were like a spiritual body-slam. I was tired, full of self-pity about some personal pressures I was under, and selfishly demanding four hours of duty-free living on a cross country flight. Still...a thought occurred to me. Out of all the seats I could have been assigned, events had been so ordered that I was seated next to this elderly woman who was alone and hoping for someone to talk to. Wasn't it at least possible that God had placed me beside

her for four hours? ‘I’m sorry to hear about your husband,’ I said, putting my book away. ‘Do you have children?’ Her face lit up a little, and the conversation took off. I did my best to draw her out, to ask her opinions, to get a glimpse of her life. I found out she was a Christian and that her church had been facing some difficult times. I listened a lot, even though the novel kept summoning me. This is God’s daughter, I kept reminding myself. She deserves someone to care about what she’s going through.

As the flight ended a surprising thing happened. I stepped off the plane feeling buoyant. A simple act of surrendering to the situation in which God had placed me ushered me into an inner reality in which I could practically taste the presence of Christ, and I felt amazingly renewed inside.”

Prayer: God, help me to respond to situations that disrupt my personal agenda with the grace and heart of one who can be aware of the needs of others and to have the courage to step outside my comfort zone and be the hands and feet of Jesus. Amen.

—Jan Batt, 2021

Saturday, February 27, 2010

Colossians 3:12-15

“Since God chose you to be the holy people whom he loves; you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.”

You must take allowance for each other’s faults and forgive the person who offends you. Remember the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. And the most important piece of clothing you must wear is love. Love is what binds us all together in perfect harmony. And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful.

The verses you have read above were written by Paul while in prison in Rome. He was addressing the Colossian church and its people. He felt that they had decided on their own to combine ideas from other philosophies and other religions. His comments were to remind them that their ideas were taking them further and further

from the truth. God is the only true connection that is always there for us. God gives us all that we need to live as Christians. God has a plan for you and me. It starts by forgiving those we see every day and those that we have not yet met. When we allow ourselves to develop relationships with others, we open the line of communications and the opportunity to do God’s work.

Prayer: Let the peace from Christ rule in your hearts. He has called on our people to develop relationships. Remind us to keep God at the center of our life and not to stray off from what he has given us. The future life of this church, community and world will begin with the relationships we continue to form. As Paul wrote: “the most important piece of clothing you must wear is love.” And the people said, “Thanks be to God.” Amen.

—Bruce Manett, 2010

Second Week of Lent

Sunday, February 28, 2021

Read John chapter 9—“*I was blind but now I see.*”

This chapter speaks of one of Jesus’ miracles—the restoring of sight to a blind man, and the unbelief of the Pharisees. They did not understand how God was working through this man “Jesus”.

How often today we are blind to the miracles around us. We think of a miracle as something that cannot be explained. Let’s review some events that illustrate this: an unusual sunrise or sunset; the steady hand of a surgeon as he performs delicate surgery; a newborn baby’s first cry; the moon at night on a newly fallen snow, giving earth an awesome glow; the arrival of crocuses and tulips in the spring; the sweet scent of lilacs early in the morning; an artist’s painting; a sculpture formed by human hands.

Most of these have a scientific explanation, but isn’t God working through nature and man? In our busy day-to-day activities, we so often fail to see or feel His presence.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, as we journey through this Lenten season, open our eyes and understanding to your presence in each

of us. Guide and strengthen us that we may be able to carry out the task you put before us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

— Sue and Cecil Flesher, 1999

Monday, March 1, 2021

Isaiah 45:22

“Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other.”

The lessons and stories told in the Bible all take place in the lands in and surrounding the Middle East. Israel is God's Promised Land. Yet God made provisions for all believers, even to the “ends of the earth,” to be included in his promises. All he requires is for us to turn to him and seek him in all areas of our lives and to believe that he is God. He is not “a god”, but God, the one and only living God that ever was or ever will be. In this day and age, society bombards us with a constant stream of things that we are assured are necessary for us to have to get along in our lives. These things range from clothing to food, to the latest in technology items, to cars, games, sports and recreational items, and absolutely anything you can think of to make life easier and more fun. We are tempted with places to go, things to do for recreation, and ways to satisfy our desires. If we take a hard look at some of these things, we may find that we begin to spend our thoughts and money and time on material things and pleasures on this world, almost worshiping them as godly. Yet the only thing that will truly bring us satisfaction and salvation is worshiping God. We don't need money or material things to do that. There is no entrance fee or secret handshake. All we need to enter the Kingdom of God is a repentant heart and a humble spirit that longs to be fulfilled. No matter where we live on this earth, all we need to do is turn to God and ask him into our lives, and we are saved, through the sacrifice of his son, Jesus Christ, who came and died for each and every one of us. There is one God, and that's all we really need.

Prayer: Dear God and Father of us all, we thank you that you don't put any limits on who is worthy of being saved. It doesn't matter who we are, where we live, or how much we have. We are all worthy in

your sight. Help us to focus on you and your Kingdom rather than on the things of this world. Keep us mindful that you are God and that through our faith in you and in your son, Jesus Christ, we will have all we need to get through this life. We praise and honor you, Dear Lord. Amen.

—Jackie Boyd, 2013

Tuesday, March 2, 2021

Acts 4:11-12

“He is ‘the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone.’ Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”

From a devotion written by Greg Laurie, who writes, “If I were to sum up Christianity with one word, I'd choose the word *done*. It's done—paid for at the cross.”

He goes on to say, “There's power in the name of Jesus Christ because it's the name above all names. The Bible tells us, ‘God elevated him to the highest honor and gave him the name above all other names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father’ (Philippians 2:9-11).

There's also salvation in His name. Romans 10:13 says: “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

Jesus proved His love for us tangibly. He showed it. And as I've often said, it wasn't the nails that held Him to the cross; it was His love for you and me.”

I couldn't say it any better... This Easter season remember the one who came to live among us and put flesh to the love that God has for us. Live a life worthy of the sacrifice; live a life that brings glory and honor to our Creator; and live a life showing and living out that love.

Prayer: Lord, we seek to honor you through our actions, our words and our love. Forgive us our shortcomings and help us to seek your guidance for our lives. Amen.

—Jan Batt, 2021

Wednesday, March 3, 2021

John 4:13-14

Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

We all go through a period of time in our lives where our main goal is to be independent and “swim against the current”. Adults like to call this the “rebel phase”. In most cases, there is no significant outcome other than fighting and frustration between parent and child. In other situations, though, rebellion is capable of changing the world. Political and social movements throughout history have reinvented our ways of life. By rejecting the unjust and incorrect, we are able to realize a better future for others and ourselves. Jesus understands this, and uses our tendency to rebel to change us from the inside out. The “water” that others drink will satiate their thirst for only a moment. Its return is inevitable. But when we reject what is normal and follow Jesus, we will never thirst again, and will reap the rewards. By following and encouraging others to rebel and follow Jesus, we save our brothers and sisters from ever “being thirsty” again.

Prayer: Dear Lord, thanks you for knowing me inside and out. Please give the strength to rebel against what is expected of me in order to realize your everlasting grace, and also give me the confidence to lead a love revolution in your name. Amen.

—Delaney Zuver, 2016

Thursday, March 4, 2021

Psalms 125:1-3

“Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be shaken but endures forever. As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds his people both now and forevermore.”

As we read Psalm 125:1-3, we are reminded that when we trust in the Lord, he will be there for us, not removed or moved, but there for us. For the wicked shall not be spared, the righteous will be

spared. Remember the Lord is with us always, all we have to do is ask and he will be there. We just open our hearts and he will come in. From personal experience, trust in the Lord and all your troubles will be eased. He will provide for you in your spiritual life as well as your personal life.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for being there for us even though we may forget and think you are not there. Forgive us of our sins and grant us the insight to know you are there to guide us through the day. Father, I open my heart to you and am glad you are there to walk with me and be with me throughout all my days. In Your most Heavenly name I pray. Amen.

—Richard Brandt

Friday, March 5, 2021

1 Corinthians 10:13

“No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.”

One of the most powerful temptations in our lives is to harbor the belief that we are strong enough to resist. We aren't. We need help.

All human beings are vulnerable. But God is faithful in that with temptation He provides a “way out.” God will help us deal with the temptation so we don't give in to pressure. God will not give us more than we have strength for. But we are not to place ourselves in situations where appeals to sinful nature are strong. We need to pray daily for strength to make us strong enough to resist.

In everything we do, we ought to give glory to God and as Christians focus on bringing praise to Him.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank you for your love and strength that helps us overcome the temptations we face every day. Help us to release everything in our lives into your loving care and know we can put our trust in you. Amen.

—Janelle Rohrbaugh, 2016

Saturday, March 6, 2021

John 21:25

“Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.”

In today’s world it is hard to imagine how precious the words of Jesus were and how amazing it is that so many were recorded. As the scripture references above, how many volumes would there be? Today in our electronic age, we can record, snapchat, email, type on Microsoft word, and so many other ways to keep a record of our thoughts and actions. Just imagine if this technology had been available in Jesus’ time?

All this technology is fun but there is something about the written word...actually reading a book. Each author has a different style or manner of telling their story. Compare the Easter story as told by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Their recall of their time with Jesus is not unlike us and how we all have different ways of re-telling a shared event...we each have a unique style and a unique story to tell.

I found this statement: “History, written on the pages of your life, has power and needs to be read. The brokenness of our lives creates a story of God’s power. Your story matters. It matters to God; it’s needed by others. As large or minuscule as you believe your story is, God has entrusted you with it to help others overcome.” (Author unknown.)

Each day is an opportunity to add to your story. It is also an opportunity to change the direction of your story. Each day we have a choice. Do we continue down the same path, do we keep repeating the same behaviors, making the same mistakes, or having the same regrets? Not all stories need a drastic re-write. Sometimes, it’s good to take a look at the course your story has taken and to rejoice in the chapters filled with laughter and love, and pleasant memories. For most of us, there have been some chapters that we would just like to take out of our book. But when you take the time to see how your story has developed, many times it is these stories that have offered the most growth, the most pain and the greatest reward.

Each chapter has formed our character, has shaped us into who we are and reflects how God has woven his grace and mercy and love through the chapters of our lives.

Prayer: Loving God, it is through our stories that other will come to know you, to see you at work. Help us to each day weave your love and grace into our lives so that our stories reflect how marvelous it is to have your handprint on our stories.

— Jan Batt, COVID Devotions 2020

Third Week of Lent

Sunday, March 7, 2021

Hosea 6:3

“We’re ready to study God, eager for God-knowledge. As sure as dawn breaks, so sure is his daily arrival. He comes as rain comes, as spring rain refreshing the ground.” (The Message)

Genuine repentance is a genuine returning to the Lord. The call to return to the Lord is one of the central messages of the book of Hosea. – Third Millennium Industries

Perhaps the fact that we, as humans, so naturally hold grudges, harbor resentment, rehash arguments, and hang on to bitterness prevents us from truly understanding God’s boundless love and forgiveness. Just as the dawn breaks and the rain comes, the opportunity to return to Him is continual. It’s paradoxically simple; we just have to desire it and humble ourselves to seek Him.

Prayer: Father, I marvel at the truth: that with each new moment, you offer opportunities for me to repent and return to you. I am eager to know you more and praise your faithfulness in the face of my consistent regret and betrayal. Amen.

—Betsy Zuver, 2016

Monday, March 8, 2021

Hebrews 6:19

“This confidence is like a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls. It leads us through the curtain of heaven into God’s inner sanctuary.”

The definition of confidence is “the quality or state of being certain.” The confidence referred to in Hebrews 6:19 is the certainty

of the promise God has given us of eternal life through the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus. God is faithful and true, therefore even in the darkest times of our lives, we must never forget that God is always available to us. When the storms of life come and uncertainty surrounds us, we must remember that God is our anchor, and because of His sacrifice we are offered the privilege of entering into His presence with total faith and trust.

Prayer: Thank you God for your wonderful gift we celebrate during this season of Lent and for always being present in our lives. Amen.

—Beth Schweitzer, 2008

Tuesday, March 9, 2021

Romans 8:38-39

“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height or depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

When the ebb and flow of life seems lowest we have but to ask God, and he surrounds us and lifts us with His love—just as we are.

Robert P. Raines says it so well, “Jesus is the human way God chose to get close to us, to pull us beside Him—to put His arm around us. Jesus comes to us right in our fear, our loneliness, our separation, our feeling of being forgotten. Jesus is listening to our hopes, our dreams and everything that is going on inside us.”

I, like you, have found that I meet our Lord in so many different ways—so many different places and in so many different people—and with Him comes joy and peace. He melts the deepest snows—and love bubbles in—He closes one door and opens another—and the sun is brighter. He provides for our needs so unexpectedly. How many times I have returned home, tired, alone, and found in my mailbox a letter from an unexpected dear friend, filled with a message from our Lord which I needed so much and which gave me assurance.

In Proverbs 3:5 it says, “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding.” I also had to learn from

Psalm 51:10, which tells us, “Create in me a clean heart, Oh God; and renew a right spirit within me.”

Prayer: Father, help us always to give our thanks for all things, our joys, our sorrows, our successes and our failures. Help us always share the love that Thou giveth us, with all mankind. Father, we only ask that we may serve you as you would have us do, and to Thee we give the glory and the praise. We ask it in the name of Thy Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

—Grace Carr, 1988

Wednesday, March 10, 2021

Psalm 121:1-2

“I lift up my eyes to the hills—where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.”

Certainly the elevation of the mountains was in the psalmists mind as he looked to the hills. The ancient Israelites had a constant reminder that their security came from God. Their natural environment encouraged them in their faith. The mountains became a symbol to them of God’s love, power and care. We too can realize the security of God’s power in our lives as we trust in God and are assured that we will live forever.

Prayer: Dear Lord, Thank you for the reminders we have that Your love is permanent. That You watch over us day and night. Your love surrounds us, as the psalmist assures “from this time forth and forever.” May we discover life by seeking God. Amen.

—Linda Bany, 2000

Thursday, March 11, 2021

Proverbs 7:24

“And now, my sons, listen to me; happy are those who keep my ways. Hear my instructions and we wise and do not neglect them.”

Recently I ran across this item from one of our other local churches, and I feel it’s worth each of us thinking about and pondering over these words for our own personal renewal this Lenten season.

IT'S UP TO YOU!

Take a piece of wax, a piece of meat, some sand, some clay, some shavings, put them on a fire and see how they react. Each of them is being acted upon by the same agent, yet—the wax melts, the meat fries, the sand dries up, the clay hardens, the shavings blaze.

Just so under identical circumstances and environment one man is made better...he becomes stronger, and another weaker, while another withers away.

This explains why one hears the Word of God and is made better. Still another hears the same thing and is made angry. Not so much what is done to us, but what we do, determines our destiny. Take heed how you hear and act.

Prayer: Dear God, we pray for a new spirit to come upon us this day so we may open our minds and hearts to Thy messages. Help us, that by doing so, we will be more humble, more tolerant, more understanding and more helpful to those around us. Renew a clean spirit within us, O Lord, and help us to be better followers of Your word. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

—Frances Hook, 1999

Friday, March 12, 2021

Psalm 27:1

“The Lord is my light and my salvation – whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life – of whom shall I be afraid?”

In our Lenten study, “the Glorious Pursuit,” Gary Thomas discusses the phrase, “do not be afraid.” I googled, out of curiosity, how many times ‘do not be afraid’ appears in the Bible and it is recorded 365 times in most translations. That’s one reminder for each day of the year. Each day, God challenges us to take up our cross and follow him. Each day, he encourages us to not fear, to be strong and brave in our pursuit of His glory. I find this very reassuring. If you are like me, I often find myself feeling inadequate, embarrassed, unsure and afraid to put myself out there and share my faith. It is a challenge to live as God wants us to live, to honor and trust in his

teachings and to present ourselves as followers—God knew we’d have our moments of weakness and uncertainty and so he offers the encouragement we need each and every day.

Trials are inevitable, a part of life. God uses them to refine us, to mold us into the image of Jesus Christ. But in the midst of all trouble, Jesus walks beside us. So when you feel like you’re drowning in a flood of trouble and difficulty, breathe deeply and relax and remember that the Lord is the stronghold of our lives and we should not fear.

Prayer: Dear God, Help us to place our trust in you knowing that you are with us always and in all things. Daily we are offered the reassurance of your steadfast love which protects us and gives us courage to face each day and the challenges that come our way. With you by our side, we shall not be afraid. Amen.

—Jan Batt, 2021

Saturday, March 13, 2021

Philippians 4:13

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

Boy, did I need to read and really “hear” this passage this week! I have noticed that, sometimes, challenges on the job can bleed into all areas of our lives—our ability to sleep, take care of ourselves, show kindness to our family members who deserve our best, and show patience and focus. I was acutely aware of this struggle while I was riding a stationary bike during a spinning class. While I tried to focus, my mind kept drifting away to other things, prompting feelings of anxiety and stress. I became aware of this and decided to change my mindset. I immediately closed my eyes as I peddled faster and faster, and I started to pray. I asked God to take my situation into His hands and to provide divine protection, guidance, and comfort. I also prayed for others in the situation, even the person at the center of my challenge. I noticed that my anxiety decreased, my focus improved, and I felt a bit less burdened even though I was peddling as fast as I could. What a relief! This passage reminds us that we can persevere, we can endure, we can heal, and we can continue to thrive when we

turn to God who will strengthen us no matter what.

Prayer: Gracious God, thank you for your strength, your protection, your love, and your guidance. Give us hope in times of despair, light in the darkness, and faith in all that is good. Grant us peace and help us to continue to give and share our burdens with you to gain spiritual strength in all that we do. Amen.

—Laura Eckhardt 2017

Fourth Week of Lent

Sunday, March 14, 2021

Acts 3:19

“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.”

Repentance is the first step in salvation. Through repentance we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, the forgiveness of sin and the grace and acceptance of God as joint-heirs with Christ. In simple terms, convert also means “to change,” as in ice to water or dollars to pesos. Theologically, it means changing from sinner to saint, filthy to holy, worldly to godly or born-again. This means, not only being sorry for having committed sin, but also turning or changing from a life of transgressing God’s commandments to a life of obedience to them. Through this our sins are blotted out, obliterated—removed completely from recognition or memory by our Lord.

Many theologians believe that the refreshing times Luke is writing about are those that will be when the saints immediately work to restore the earth to its beauty and productivity as it was in the Garden of Eden. Who does not want to be in that number, the tens of thousands Enoch spoke about in Jude?

While meditating on this verse I realized what day this devotion would appear and it took on a whole different meaning. Valentine’s Day is filled with all sorts of “doings” as an outward sign of the love and compassion for one another. Many years ago Christ showed his love for us in that he died while we were yet sinners so

to bring mankind into a right relationship with God. So on this day let us show Christ our love for him by following the advice Luke gives us in this simple verse.

Prayer: Father, as sinners we repent of our sins and ask for your guidance and patience in changing our lives and truly becoming followers of Christ. In His Name, Amen.

—Rick Mettert, 2013

Monday, March 15, 2021

James 1:12

“Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.”

When was the last time that you had a hard day, hard month, hard year? Did you feel like God just got up and walked away? That He let you deal with the problems all by yourself? Jesus told us that if we invited him to live in our hearts that he would bring us peace unlike anything we could imagine. He also promised to be by our sides through everything. He did not promise an easier life, riches, or problem free living. Life brings its ups and downs; sometimes we go way down. But through it all, God is right there with us, holding our hand and helping us walk through the dark valley. All we need is to ask God to be with us, invite him to live with us and remember to pray each day through hard times and easy. James reminds us that each time we go through a hard part of life and rely on God to be there, that when we finally come out on the other side we have a reward from God. What is it? A stronger faith, stronger conviction, and life in heaven. So do not be afraid to suffer, step strongly with confidence that God is there to help solve the problem. When life deals you lemons, what will you do with them?

Prayer: Dear Lord, please help me to hold onto you as I go through the tough times in life. Thank you for always being there with me, to guide me and council me as I deal with each day of my life. Thank you for helping me to grow stronger in my faith and the peace that you offer me through your Son. In your name I pray this. Amen

— Marla Scannell, 2008

Tuesday, March 16, 2021

Hebrews 10:23

“Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.”

The word hope has always fascinated me. It’s a word we use often when we wish for something or anticipate receiving something we want. But the truest meaning of the word hope lies in the Biblical definition – the confident expectation of what God has promised and its strength is in His faithfulness.

This brings to mind some vivid memories of my experience in Haiti. So many of the people we encountered, spoke with or spent time with were filled with this unwavering hope. Even though their living conditions were so unbelievable, the poverty so great, the sickness and lack of clean water and healthy food rampant...they smiled, they poured out grace and kindness...they were living proof of what hope should look like. They lived with the expectation that no matter their circumstances they knew of a God who loved them. They anticipated the day that their lives would be changed. And they prayed.

Their living hope was contagious. How could you not want that same deep belief that no matter what life hands you there is hope to be found in the security of knowing the power of our Redeemer. I still carry the desire to live with that same hope, to know unwaveringly that I am loved and that my life has meaning. I think we all desire that...we all have the hope to be in a deep in relationship with our Lord so that no matter what life hands us—we will be able to withstand the storms and rejoice in the rainbows.

God is faithful...we just need to profess our unswerving hope in Him.

Prayer: Father God, you are the hope of those who profess their love for you...let us desire to be faithful servants allowing others to see what living with your hope is like. Amen

— Jan Batt, COVID Devotions 2020

Wednesday, March 17, 2021

1 John 4:12

“No one has ever seen God, but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.”

If you read the verses before this (verses 7-11) you will see John trying to explain and describe what love is. Verse 10 says it completely: “This is love; not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.” God is love in ACTION!

Maybe that is why verse 12 states that no one has ever seen God. Unless we know God and have that personal relationship we ourselves will never see God or experience His love for us. Thank goodness this verse also has the word BUT...that means there is more to the story!

Although we could never know love on our own, God has made a way possible! God says if we love one another, just as he loved us and sent his son for us, we will know love! This ACTION of love from God allows us choice and capability of love. Believing in His son, and accepting the gift of salvation from God, then we too can know God’s love and love one another! “God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.” In obedience to God to love one another, God makes us complete.

Prayer: Gracious God, remind us that we are created to love, praise and serve you by loving and serving those around us. May you help us to use words and actions that encourage others and love that we abundantly receive. Amen.

— Ross and Connie Cox, 2008

Thursday, March 18, 2021

Psalms 23

“The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name’s sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff they comfort me. You prepare a table before

me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

This Bible verse had eluded me for many years. I had only heard it read at funerals and even though it seemed appropriate in that setting, I felt that I was somehow missing something in its true meaning. It always had a dark connotation to it.

In Sunday school we shared this scripture and substituted our name for the ‘I’ and ‘me’ and ‘you’ in the verse. This made it seem more personal but still left me wondering; what am I missing?

This scripture came to bear witness to the power of God’s word when my Dad was in the hospital and it was a matter of time before he passed from this life. My sister had left for the night to get some rest and I offered to stay with Dad. As I sat at his side, holding onto his large strong hand, I shared some memories with him from years past. His only response was his even though labored breathing. I don’t know why but as I packed up to head to the hospital, I had grabbed a book of Psalm’s and Proverbs. I pulled the book from my purse and it opened to the 23rd Psalm. I remember how reassuring this verse was as I read it aloud to my Dad. As I finished the reading his breathing became less labored. Through tears, I told Dad that it was ok, that it was time for him to go home. His grip loosened on my hand as he took his last breath. It was in that moment I understood what this Psalm represented to me.

You see, my Dad was not a religious man. He believed in God but it wasn’t until that morning that he had given his life to Christ. And it was amazing to me that just like a shepherd Jesus guided my Dad on his final journey.

Jesus wants all of us to know of his love for us, that he is with us in all things and that with him we lack nothing. As the living water, his love flows through us and refreshes our souls. He wants us to know and feel his strength and his comfort, and to not fear. For he is preparing a place for us. My Dad discovered God’s grace and mercy in

his last hours. I discovered how God knows our hearts and guides us through those tough times and offers us his reassuring love.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, having a relationship with you allows us to know peace like a river; to know your strength and protection; to know your love and the security that through the trials of this life you are with us. Help us to lead others to you, Lord, so they too can know of your great love. Amen.

— Jan Batt, COVID Devotions 2020

Friday, March 19, 2021

1 Thessalonians 5:18

“Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

Of the ten lepers who were healed, only one came back to thank Jesus—10% thankful, 90% not thankful—in which group are we? We all take so many things for granted. Our modern conveniences have become such second nature that we do not stop to think that they were perfected for us at a cost of time, effort and energy on part of our fellow man.

Even our church and our faith are taken for granted—our church which has its sign—the cross, symbol of the supreme sacrifice and which has been bequeathed to us by the undying devotion of millions of Christians. Appreciation and thanksgiving are sure paths to God. No joy of life is complete without the spirit of thankfulness.

To thank God is to think of God. Our expression of gratitude to Him makes God real to us. We feel his presence: “O give thanks to the Lord for He is good; His mercy endures forever.”

Prayer: Our Father, who hast blessed us so greatly with earthly gifts, bless us also with spiritual enrichment that shall cause us to be more like Thee. We acknowledge Thee as the Giver of all that is good and beautiful. Help us that we may never be guilty of the sin of ingratitude. In His dear name we pray. Amen.

—Dorothy Opdycke, 1988

Saturday, March 20, 2021

Ephesians 2:22

“And in Him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit.”

In the great western forests are many of the tallest trees in the world. Their branches reach almost to the sky, and their trunks are so wide that it would take a dozen people joining arms to reach around them. For such big trees, their roots hardly reach below the ground’s surface. Their roots are too shallow, that you would expect them to fall over at the slightest breeze. But these trees stand straight and tall for hundreds of years because the roots of each tree spread out over the ground, and the roots of the other trees cover them and hold them in place. The trees of the great western forests stand strong because their foundation for life is rooted in mutuality. The church is like those forests and the members like the trees. Our foundation for life is in community, in relationship with Christ and with each other.

Prayer: Lord, let your love be the roots that hold us together and keep us strong. And may we join together as your people to build a strong foundation of faith in our community leading others to know you. Amen.

—Casey Wilson, 1999

Fifth Week of Lent

Sunday, March 21, 2021

2 Timothy 4:7-8

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, will reward to me on that day – and not only to me, but to all who have longed for his appearing.”

Being a disciple of Christ is not easy. There are many obstacles and struggles in following the path to Christ. Paul tells Timothy that

running a race is not an easy, short dash, rather, one that will test our faith, strength and courage. A race that is long and difficult. By finishing and staying true to Christ during this difficult race, how wonderful it is knowing that our “good fight” will be rewarded by the grace of the Lord.

Prayer: Lord, give me the strength to run the long race knowing that there will be struggles that await me. The reward of finishing the race with your crown of righteousness will be with you in heaven. Amen.

—Todd and Norma Fruth, 2008

Monday, March 22, 2021

James 5:11

“Indeed we call blessed those who showed endurance. You have heard of the endurance of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord; how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.”

James reminds his readers that they “have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.” When thinking on the endurance of Job, we must remember that God did not suddenly become compassionate and merciful to him. He had been that way all along. God’s unchanging character IS compassion and mercy. He is love. Whatever trials, pressures and hardships we are dealing with are not because He is angry or upset with us. They are because He is compassionate and merciful. He will bring us to the point where we will understand that as clearly as Job did. We can count on the fact that God’s purposes for us come from his great compassion and mercy. We turn our eyes toward Him, and away from our circumstances to grow in this wonderful truth.

Prayer: Lord, help us to endure whatever hardships befall us, remembering the unending faith of Job. Remind us that we can always count on your compassion and mercy when circumstances seem hopeless. Keep us ever mindful of your purpose for us. Amen.

—Sandy Bowers 2010

Tuesday, March 23, 2020

Romans 8:28-29

“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”

Gary Thomas (“the Glorious Pursuit”) in his book reveals its purpose is to help us become who God created us to be. His reflections into God’s character and our character is meant to help us reflect on who we are and who we can become in Christ. And as many of you know or have experienced, it’s in the hard times, the hard things that life throws at us that we see our true character. Mr. Thomas not only wants us to reflect on our character but to learn to be thankful in those times.

He suggests that we start by thanking God for the easy things. Piece of cake, right? Nothing too complicated there. Moving on to being thankful for what God is doing in the difficult circumstances is not so easy. But if we miss, or don’t rise up to the challenge of thankfulness even in the hard times he feels we miss out. Because, he states “Virtually any circumstance—however painful or pleasant—can be used by God to shape the character of Christ in us, and it is for that shaping we can be thankful.”

Thankfulness doesn’t necessarily come naturally. It’s something that requires practice; it requires discipline; it requires that we pay attention to what’s going on in our world; it requires that we humble ourselves; it requires that we seek God and his wisdom in all things.

This Lenten season, practice being thankful in the good times and in the challenges of your life. Open your hearts to the possibilities that God has for each of us in all circumstances.

Prayer: Dear Lord, we thank you for being with us in all things – the good and the difficult times. Help us to practice thankfulness in all situations. Amen.

—Jan Batt, 2010

Wednesday, March 24, 2021

John 6:37-39

“All that the Father gives me will come to me; and him who comes to me I will not cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent me; this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all the He has given me, but raise it up at the last day.”

(Written in 1988) Jesus was sent down to earth, not for himself, but for us. During this Lenten season, we should look at our own life and determine if we are living for ourselves or for others. If we truly believe in our Lord, Jesus Christ, we must follow his lead and live our lives for others. With this year being our 150th Anniversary of the founding of the Wesley United Methodist Church, we should remember our fine heritage and previous members who made our church what it is today, a caring and loving church. Let us live every day for Him and make 1988 the best year ever at Wesley.

Prayer: Father, as we go about our daily chores, help us to live as you would have us live. We know we are born on this earth for everyone, not just for ourselves. Thank you for giving us Jesus, who showed us the way and for his sacrifices that he endured in his life for us. Amen.

—John Opdycke, 1988

Thursday, March 25, 2021

Psalms 118:24

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

Psalms 118 was written as a thanksgiving for “the Lord’s saving goodness”. The psalmist would not have been aware that in verse 22, he had clearly identified Christ whom we celebrate at Easter. God’s saving goodness in His Son Jesus.

Every Monday morning our Wesley L.I.F.E. Group begins its meeting with the lively lifting tune titled, “This is the Day”. The words consist

solely of the words in Psalm 118:24. What a beautiful way to begin a Monday morning. In fact, what a beautiful way to begin every day in the week. This is always the very first hymn that is sung at the Sunday worship services in all the nursing homes L.I.F.E. serves.

In the creation story in Genesis (1:3-5), we are told of the very first day ever. “And God called the light day.” Do you know that in my 70 plus years of life, that light of day has never failed to occur? That is more than 27, 000 times, so I’m really quite confident that it will occur again tomorrow. Every day is a gift from God. What should we do with each day? Especially during this season we call Lent—we should begin each day with a right attitude—one of thanksgiving and praise for a new day and a Savior who gave us new life through his love, compassion and sacrifice. Let our everyday be one in which we walk with Him and talk with Him and know that we are His own. No day can be better than that.

Prayer: Thank you Lord for this day and every day. May I truly be all that you want me to be today and may I reflect your love, your compassion and your forgiveness to those around me. Amen.

— Bill Smith, 2008

Friday, March 26, 2021

Psalm 129

“They have greatly oppressed me from my youth – let Israel say – they have greatly oppressed me from my youth, but they have not gained the victory over me...”

This scripture lesson tells us even though we have trials and tribulations, the Lord will always prevail. Descriptive details reveal how even the most terrible circumstances can be overcome by the Lord's justice. The enemies that threaten us will be shamed by God. We will be blessed in the name of the Lord. To me, this lesson tells us there is always hope and the verses clearly show us specific ways. Even though we may feel threatened, God's wonderful grace and love for us is always available. God is continually available for us and blesses us in His name.

Prayer: Dear Lord, thank you for loving us unconditionally in all circumstances. We pray you will guide us through our daily lives and bless us in Jesus' name. Amen.

— Mona Harsila 2000

Saturday, March 27, 2021

Proverbs 3:1-2

“My child, never forget the things I have taught you. Store my commands in your heart, for they will give you a long and satisfying life.”

This is a call to us to be obedient to God's word, and also a promise that if we are obedient, the result is a fulfilled life. Sounds so easy. Yet I still find it difficult to give everything over to God. To let go of trying to be in charge and allow God's will to take control and work his will through me. How are we to know when what we say or do is God's will and not our own? By looking to God through study of his word and prayer we are better able to tell the difference, but it is an ongoing process.

Prayer: Father, you know who I am and what you want me to be. Help me to understand your will, and be obedient to your call to me. Amen.

—Marty Manett 2008

Holy Week

Sunday, March 28, 2021 Palm Sunday

Luke 10:25-28

“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; and ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

“You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”

God created us to be in relationship, to be in relationship with him and with others. We have been given the gift of love and this love is not to be kept to ourselves. Through Jesus, we are given the secret to abundant life when he gave us the great commandment – to love God and to love our neighbor. When we honor the significant relationships in our lives—God first, family second, followed by our friends and neighbors, the rest of life falls into place.

But to live this way, we need help. And we need to be constantly working on our relationship with God. We tend to be pretty self-absorbed and don't always give enough time to build and nourish the most important relationships in our lives. I am guilty of this. Life is busy and some days it's just enough to make it through the day let alone have time to read scripture, do devotions or pray or to spend quality time with the people most important in my life. The days I spend like this leave me feeling empty and filled with regret. On the other hand, when I take time to be intentional in spending time with God, catching up with family and friends and working on strengthening my relationships, I feel more fulfilled and more alive. God has a way of letting in the sunshine and helping me to direct my energies in ways that strengthen my walk with him and this enables me to better reflect his love to others.

Prayer: Father God, you have shown us the way to love in the now that we might have life forever with you. Help us to reflect and share your love to our neighbor in hopes that he too may know the path to eternal life. Amen.

— Jan Batt, 2017

Monday, March 29, 2021

John 13:34-35

“Let me give you a new command: Love one another. In the same way I loved you, you love one another. This is how everyone will recognize that you are my disciples—when they see the love you have for each another.”

Over the years, I've come to learn that there are three different types of love in the Bible. Eros is the type of love that we experience in

a romantic relationship when we have strong feelings for another person. Eros is actually a Greek word that means desire and longing. Another type is Philos and describes the special feelings we have for a close friend, brother or sister. IT develops over time and through shared experiences. The last type of love is called Agape and is not determined by feelings at all. It is the kind of love that Jesus showed us when he died on the cross for us. Agape love is an action; it is something we do and can be done even when we don't actually feel like doing it at all. This is the type of love that Jesus is taking about in today's verses. It can be very difficult and in my opinion doesn't come naturally to humans.

In my job as a teacher, there have been many times over the years that I have had to work with someone that I found difficult. Fortunately a wonderful Christian friend and fellow teacher long ago gave me some great advice, which has served me well. She said, “Whenever you have someone who is challenging to get along with, pray for them.” The best thing about praying for people is that is able to do far more than we could ever imagine. In the beginning, I'd pray that God would change the person and or their behavior, however, over time, I've been able to realize that more often than not, God changed my feelings for them. Praying for someone is one of the best examples of agape love and it is relatively simple to do. Besides, it is a great way to be a loving disciple of Jesus.

Prayer: Dear loving God, thank you for loving us in spite of our shortcomings. Help us every day to be the disciples you call us to be and to make a commitment to show agape love to everyone. Amen.

—Val Plouck, 2017

Tuesday, March 30, 2021

Psalm 118:1

“Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; His love endures forever.”

As believers in Christ, we can define the word love as God's passionate affection for all others and the forever is eternal. We have confidence in God's eternal love. Even as situations in our lives are

changing, God’s love for us is unchanging. God will guide us through our journey here on earth and stay close to us always. God’s love is constant and patient. He wants us to love Him through the good times and the bad. Our love for Him must be as genuine as His love for us. God loves us despite what He knows about us! Nothing can take His love from us.

Acknowledge God’s goodness and give thanks in all things. Are we truly grateful for what God has given us? Dissatisfaction occurs when our attention shifts from what we have to what we don’t have. Do not allow unfulfilled desires to cause us to forget God’s gifts. Be thankful for God’s presence in our lives by offering gifts of self, time and resources. Seek to help and serve others with kindness, love and support. Remember what God has done, tell others about it and share God’s glory. If we are truly thankful, our lives will show it.

Prayer: Lord, teach us to be a thankful people as we remain safe and secure in your eternal love. Amen.

— Teresa Ford-Snyder, 2008

Wednesday, March 31, 2021

1 Thessalonians 5:8

“But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and hope of salvation as a helmet.”

This verse tells us that our works need to reflect the love, faith, and hope that we have in God. If we look towards God all the time to direct the path we travel, our works will be approved by God. 2 Timothy 2:15 states, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed.” This can become AWANA (Approved Workers Are Not Ashamed). When our works are approved by God, we do not have to have them covered by darkness. We can let them out in the day or the light of God.

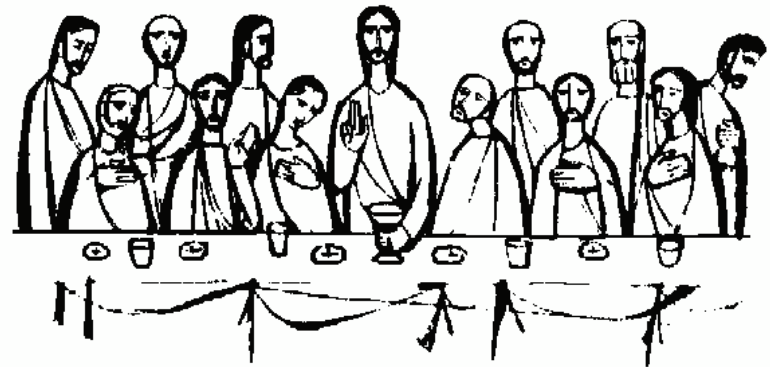
To make sure that our works will be approved, we can take our morning devotion time to ask God questions and wait—listening for His answers. Questions like: “What plans do you have for me today?”

“Have I put on God’s armor?” “Are my works from yesterday ones which I can be proud of or ashamed of?”

I want my works approved by God. I pray that today/tomorrow/every day I will follow God’s plans for me. Do you want your works approved and God’s plans for you followed? Ask God for His help.

Prayer: Dear Lord and Savior, we ask that you be our breastplate and helmet plus the redeemer that you are armor against sin. Each person who has received You as Lord and Savior needs to remember the armor You provide. By having morning devotions, we can put on that armor and find out our path for today. Thank you Lord for all You continually do for us. By starting our day with You, we know that you will help us have works that will let your light shine through us. Amen.

— Beth Dawson, 2012



Thursday, April 1, 2021 Maundy Thursday

John 14:6

“Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

Our relationship to God is extraordinarily informed by Jesus’ life. Today’s scripture reminds us of some of the most-often repeated texts in the New Testament. Jesus is telling Thomas that all persons might lean on Jesus as the renewing model of, and foundation for, faith. Jesus’ life is to inform ours. While in Lent we think of the “God of

the Broken,” in John we hear of Jesus as a completely special Gift of God for healing. The Gospel images Jesus as the Good Shepherd, as the Gate, as the Bread of Life, as the Light of the World, and as the Vine. Today is Maundy Thursday, the remembrance of that incredibly special meal! As we prepare for the conclusion of Holy Week, Jesus promises his Light in a tough existence.

Our life with God is completed by our understanding of Jesus’ way, truth and life. Continually we study, worship and pray to understand how that One Solitary Life models our lives as Christians. Striving daily to discern “What Would Jesus Do?” Is surely not easy, but Jesus’ response to Thomas remains a model to help us.

Prayer: Precious God: In Lent we remember Jesus’ life and his interactions with broken people. In our relationships with you, we plan to use Jesus as an ideal to follow. Amen.

—Julie Fritz-Bergman

Friday, April 2, 2021 Good Friday

1 Peter 2:24

“He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.”

This scripture is filled with the visual depiction of Jesus nailed to the cross. Jesus took up his cross and died in order that we might have life. We are called as followers of Jesus to take up our cross daily so that we might die to our sins and live for righteousness.

Our God is a God of relationship and he wants us to use our relationship with him to be the hands and feet of Jesus today. By picking up our cross each day, we are seeking to be more Christ-like. We are seeking to find purpose and meaning for our lives. We are seeking to walk the walk, not just talk the talk. We are seeking to daily walk closer and closer with the God that promises to love us, to guide us, to offer us grace, and to forgive us. The challenge is our commitment to this relationship.

Jesus gave us the most amazing gift—he died on that tree for each of us. We all have the opportunity to cash in on that gift but there is a catch. We have to develop a relationship with him. In order to do this we need to spend time with him daily; we need to spend time in prayer, to study his word, to be in fellowship with other believers, and to share the good news with others. But in order to receive the gift of everlasting life, we need to give our lives to God. Being committed to this relationship will be life changing.

Prayer: Father God, This gift you have offered to each of us is indescribable. I am humbled that you would call me your child and offer me life despite my shortcomings. Give me the strength each day to carry my cross, to strive to deepen my relationship with you and be more like Christ to those I encounter every day. In your precious Son’s name. Amen.

—Jan Batt, 2016

Saturday, April 3, 2021

Hymn # 302 UMH “Christ The Lord Is Risen Today”

Christ the Lord is risen and we sing with joy, ALLELUIA! You cannot feel anything but extreme excitement when you sing this song. It reassures us that He fought the fight and won the battle; His death did not stop what they were hoping for; He died to save our souls. It also encourages us that love’s redeeming work is done; lives again our glorious King; show us now where Christ has led; everlasting life is this. All of this in such a short “human” time on earth. But it is obvious that Christ is with us ALWAYS and He has given us EVERYTHING... reach out and take it. Christ the Lord is risen, ALLELUIA!

Prayer: Christ the Lord is risen today. Alleluia! Earth and heaven in chorus say, “Alleluia.” Raise your joys and triumphs high, “Alleluia!” Sing ye heavens and earth reply, “Alleluia!” Amen.

—A Friend of Wesley, 2000



April 4, 2021
Easter Sunday

Matthew 17:1-5

“After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a mountain by themselves. There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun and his clothes became as white as the light. Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus.

Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.”

While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!”

In today message, Pastor Peter talked about transfiguration, not only Jesus’ transfiguration that day on the mountain, but our transfiguration when we surrender ourselves to living a life of obedience, love and thankfulness.

Gary Thomas writes, “Obedience is our calling, our cover, our privilege, and our honor, precisely because of who we’re called to be obedient to. Obedience to God means freedom from the crowd’s opinion, deliverance from our own rank and desires, and liberation from the tyranny and stranglehold of sin. Obedience is the spiritual attitude of Christ that completes the clothing of ourselves in His character...Obedience, ironic as it seems, will give you back the life

you want to live, a life of fullness, mission, and purpose.”

This Easter, take a look back over this season of Lent...can you see a change in your attitude, your purpose, your desire to be more Christ-like, your intent to draw closer to God, your relationships, your outlook on life, your willingness to surrender to God’s plan for your life? Have you been transformed into someone who is living more like Jesus? As Jesus was transfigured that day on the mountain, you too can experience a life changing metamorphosis—being in relationship with Christ. As it says in the hymn, “I surrender all, I surrender all, All to thee, my blessed Savior, I surrender all”—that is what we are called to do—the total surrender of our hearts and allowing God’s plan for us to be fulfilled in us. That is when his virtues will transform us and in Christ we will be reborn, transformed into his likeness.

Prayer: Blessed Father, may this Easter be a time of true restoration for your people, your chosen ones. Help us to fully understand the transformation that is possible when we are obedient in following you and the plans you have for our lives. May it be so. Amen.

—Jan Batt ,2021/ Gary Thomas

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As I continue my faith journey, the lessons learned during this Lenten season has brought new light to my perspective and the focus of my faith. God desires to transform me and you.

“Can they tell I’ve been with Jesus, does my life in His reflect, can His kindness and compassion both be seen by all I’ve met; do my words bring consolation, carry balm as His would do, can the worried and the anxious find His in strength in me, anew; do the lonely sense His presence when I take their hand in mine, do they recognize the Savior—in the human see divine; do they see how much He loves them by the way I show I care, do they get an honest picture of the One whose name I bear? May the world see only Jesus when they turn their eyes on me, may they see I’ve made the journey all the way to Calvary.” (Author unknown)

—Jan Batt, 2021