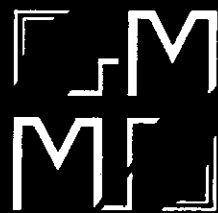


MCGUIRE METHODIST — CHURCH —

2025 Lenten Devotional

YOU OPEN YOUR HAND AND SATISFY THE
DESIRE OF EVERY LIVING THING.

Psalm 167:16



LENTEN DEVOTIONAL 2025

My heart overflows! So many faithful people have contributed to this Lenten Devotional. Last year, I challenged the congregation to join me in sharing their own prayers and acts of worship in the 2025 devotional. They exceeded my expectations as they contributed well over half of the daily readings. Some of those who contributed in 2025 were new to Lent in 2024. Now, their faith journey has led them to share their own hope and encouragement with us all.

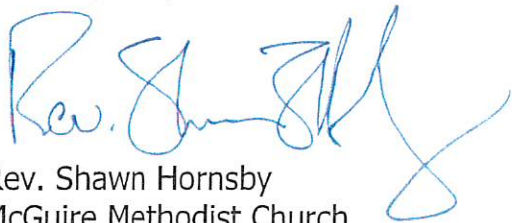
If you are new to “observing a Holy Lent,” let me assure you that there’s nothing extraordinary to the Christian tradition. The Church observes Lent as a time of preparation before celebrating the resurrection of Jesus. Many people engage in various forms of fasting, prayer, service, or devotion. This devotional leads you through the 40 days of Lent beginning Ash Wednesday, March 5, and ending Easter Sunday, April 20.

If you are counting, that’s more than 40 days! During Lent, the Church viewed each Sunday as a mini-resurrection day and thereby broke their fast. So technically, we do not engage in fasting and others acts of sacrifice on Sunday because it’s a day of feasting and celebrating the Lord in worship. However, none of those rules should become legalistic or binding. All of this should point us to the amazing love, grace, and truth of Jesus.

Thank you for reading and praying with us this season. And my special thanks to everyone who submitted a devotion for this work. I know that some of you went far outside your comfort zone to allow God to speak through you. I hope you have discovered the secret I discovered years ago, we who search the Scriptures to share with others learn far more than we could ever teach.

Please feel free to contact me if you have questions or prayer concerns.

Blessings to you all!



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IMPORTANT DATES:

Ash Wednesday – March 5, 2025

- **5:30PM Evening Meal**
- **6PM Evening Service**

Palm Sunday – April 13, 2025

- **1030AM Worship Service**
- **1145AM Baked Potato Lunch**
- **1245PM Easter Egg Hunt**

Maundy Thursday – April 17, 2025

- **6PM Evening Service**

Good Friday – April 18, 2025

- **6PM Evening Service**

Easter Sunday – April 20, 2025

- 6:30AM Sunrise Service (Kiroli Park Bandstand)**
- 9:30AM Easter Brunch (McGuire Methodist Church)**
- 10:30AM Morning Service (McGuire Methodist Church)**

ASH WEDNESDAY, MARCH 5, 2025

Isaiah 58:3-14 by Greg Green

3"Why have we fasted and You do not see? Why have we humbled ourselves and You do not notice?' Behold, on the day of your fast you find your desire, And drive hard all your workers.

4"Behold, you fast for contention and strife and to strike with a wicked fist. You do not fast like you do today to make your voice heard on high.

5"Is it a fast like this which I choose, a day for a man to humble himself? Is it for bowing one's head like a reed And for spreading out sackcloth and ashes as a bed? Will you call this a fast, even an acceptable day to the Lord?

6"Is this not the fast which I choose, To loosen the bonds of wickedness, To undo the bands of the yoke, And to let the oppressed go free And break every yoke?

7"Is it not to divide your bread with the hungry And bring the homeless poor into the house; When you see the naked, to cover him; And not to hide yourself from your own flesh?

(Continue reading this great passage in your Bible!)

Some of the problems I face during Lent are what to give up, when to give it up, and how long to keep on giving up something that I enjoy, or that is a normal part of everyday life. Do I eat only fish on Fridays after Ash Wednesday? Do I get the ashes imposed on my forehead as a symbol? Exactly what sacrifices are required?

The church down the street fasts on the first 21 days of January. Another fasts one day every week, yet another before asking for healing or revival. What's the right thing to do?

I think the real questions may be these:

1. What can we do to glorify GOD by doing acts of righteousness for our fellow man, by treating them with dignity and respect?
2. What can we do for others by feeding and clothing them?
3. What can we do to free those who are oppressed from the yokes we place on them through our inability to love them as GOD loves them?
4. How can we leave off finger pointing and speaking wickedness towards our fellow man?
5. How can we pour ourselves out for others?
6. Are we symbolically acting out or really doing for others in a way that benefits them physically and spiritually?
7. Is it giving something up for ourselves to others that is more important to our Father?

The answers may be found by seeking GOD in prayer to find where our gifts and talents are of use in service to our fellow man. In this, we can get the answers we seek as to what giving up truly is: surrender of our will to that of GOD.

THURSDAY, MARCH 6, 2025

Colossians 3:2 by Courtney Hornsby

What is Lent? We've explored the purpose and meaning of Lent in our Sunday School class as many of our fellow classmates did not grow up in a denomination that practiced Lent.

As someone who grew up Episcopal, Lent was just something we did every year, mainly by habit. When you grow up doing something, it's easy to sometimes forget or overlook the true meaning of it. This is particularly true when trying to teach Lent to others who know very little about it.

In my research for ways to explain Lent to my Sunday School class, I came across a great four-minute video from Jon Jorgenson that explains Lent and provided a reminder of the true meaning behind this season. Lent is a time to reflect, repent and prepare our hearts for the celebration of Easter and Christ's resurrection from the dead.

"Tessarakosti" in Greek means "The 40." During this 40-day period, many Christians will fast, often from things such as sweets, sodas, television or social media. Instead of viewing fasting as a punishment, we should view this as an opportunity to give something up so we can have more room to pursue God in our lives. We remove something to make room for the one thing.

Whether we choose to practice fasting, intentional prayer, reflection or study this Lent, these 40 days can help prepare us to experience the full joy of Easter and to pursue God with greater intensity.

"Pursue God like never before so we can celebrate him like never before." – Jon Jorgenson

Colossians 3:2

"Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on Earth."

FRIDAY, MARCH 7, 2025

Luke 8:1-3 by Rev. Shawn Hornsby

Soon afterwards, He began going around from one city and village to another, proclaiming and preaching the kingdom of God. The twelve were with Him, and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and sicknesses: Mary who was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who were contributing to their support out of their private means.

This simple opening to Chapter 8 of Luke's Gospel does so much more than give us the setting and introduce other important people in Jesus's life. This passage tells us about what it takes for the Kingdom mission to be successful!

Have you ever wondered how you could make a difference for the Kingdom of God? How could God use you to disciple others, share the Gospel, or create new opportunities for people to know Jesus as their Lord and Savior?

In these short introductory verses, we of course learn of Jesus and His movements and activities. Luke also tells us of the twelve. But then, we learn of these women who were *healed of evil spirits and sicknesses* as well as others who were supporting the ministry out of their own wealth.

No, this isn't a devotional about financial giving...but you can include it in the list of ways to support the Kingdom. Instead, this short introductory paragraph reminds me of the importance of a robust support network for any ministry. It's easy to see Jesus in the stories and long to fulfill such a role. I don't think it's too difficult to imagine filling the sandals of the twelve as they had their own experiences preaching, teaching, and healing.

However, how many of us think of how important these women were to what took place in the ministry of Jesus? We certainly read of the great conversions, confrontations, healings, and other moments and yet we never hear of how arrangements were made or how the bills were paid. Someone spoke to the owners of the donkey and the upper room before Jesus sent His disciples to prepare them for His arrival in Jerusalem! Who did that?

Today, give thanks for your part in the Kingdom of God. Be encouraged that no matter what you do or who sees it, your Father in Heaven knows that you serve Him faithfully.

If you have not found your place, then make that your prayer this Lenten season. Ask God to reveal to you how He has uniquely gifted, equipped, and called you to serve Him. And in all things, give thanks!

SATURDAY, MARCH 8, 2025

Psalm 90:12 by Rev. Johnny Hankins

"So, teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

Teach Us to Number Our Days

Growing up as a child my family attended Gordon Ave. Methodist Church on the southside of Monroe. I learned much about God and his love from several pastors and a very faithful congregation. I learned about Jesus from Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, worship, and Sunday evenings at MYF. (Methodist Youth Fellowship.) We met at 6 on Sunday evenings before evening worship. We did not have a large group but a faithful few my age who attended. We did not watch videos or have any fancy teaching lessons. We just listened to Mrs. Katie Lawson as she told us a Bible story while we sat in a circle. The last thing we did before dismissal was to hold hands and repeat Psalm 90:12: "So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." I will never forget repeating this verse, holding hands in our circle and Mrs. Lawson leading us. This verse has echoed in my heart all these years. Numbering my days as a child did not mean much back then. Now that I am much older, counting my days takes on a powerful meaning.

I read a devotion in "Our Daily Bread" where a high school teacher in Los Angeles had a unique way of stimulating her students to think. One morning they came to class and the teacher had written the number 25,550 on the board. One student raised their hand and asked the teacher why this particular number was written. The teacher explained that the number 25,550 represented the number of days in the life of a person that lives to be 70. The teacher was trying to emphasize life's brevity and the value of each day. It is important that we make the most of our opportunities each day to honor God, to serve others and proclaim our faith in Christ.

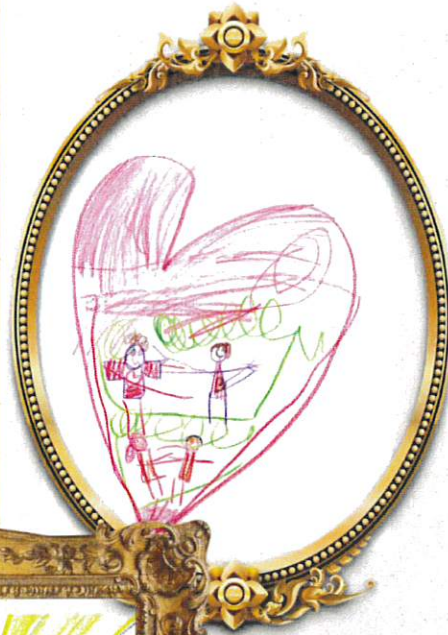
Prayer: "Lord please help me to number each of my days, during Lent. Help me not to spend time foolishly but invest my time wisely. Amen"

SUNDAY, MARCH 9, 2025
Easter by Lilah Mae Myers

EASTER IS ALL ABOUT



New life



Love



ARTIST
LILAH MAE MYERS

ALL ABOUT JESUS

MONDAY, MARCH 10, 2025

Matthew 28:16-20 by Christi Brasiel

Staying Mission Focused

During this special time of reflection, we come to you in full surrender:

We ask that you continue to be with us as we grow Your Kingdom.

Our Heavenly Father wants us to pray, not just to honor Him but to have a deeper relationship with him so that we can become closer to Him. We should always start with prayer before doing His work. *(Ephesians 6:18 "Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere")*

Jesus chose the twelve because He taught us community was the foundation of our church. *(Romans 15:7 Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God")*

The Great Commission teaches us that we are commanded to grow the church and to glorify Jesus so one day we can become closer with Him in paradise. so that all can come to a full knowledge of Christ, trust Him for their salvation and to live eternally with Him. This inspires us daily to continue to spread the Good News. *(Matthew 28:16-20 Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.")*

Jesus loves us so much that he wants all His children to be with him. He doesn't want a single person to perish. *(2 Peter 3:9 "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead, he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.")*

Dear Jesus,

We ask that you continue to walk with us as we learn to bring people closer to you, to know you, and to give you their hearts. We ask for strength and confidence as we speak and share the good news to everyone, so that all know your name. In your name we pray. Amen.

TUESDAY, MARCH 11, 2025

Nehemiah 8:9-10 by Rev. Shawn Hornsby

Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who were interpreting for the people said to them, "Don't mourn or weep on such a day as this! For today is a sacred day before the Lord your God." For the people had all been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law.

And Nehemiah continued, "Go and celebrate with a feast of rich foods and sweet drinks, and share gifts of food with people who have nothing prepared. This is a sacred day before our Lord. Don't be dejected and sad, for the joy of the Lord is your strength!"

Imagine the scene, Nehemiah along with Ezra and the rest of the priests summons ALL the people to hear the reading of the Law. Ezra stands on a high wooden platform so that all the people can see him as he reads the law from sunrise to noon. Every time Ezra blessed the Lord the responded with "Amen, Amen!" Spread throughout the people, the Levites taught the meaning and application of the Law to the people. God's people stood together to hear the reading of the Law and be transformed.

After their recent period of exile, the Law reminded the people of their identity as God's people, centered its truth in their lives, and called them to repentance and forgiveness before God.

As a result of this corporate time of humility and obedience, the people loved God more, changed their ways, experienced spiritual renewal, and committed to searching the Scriptures.

Earlier this year, the congregation learned of the power of reading the Bible a minimum of FOUR times per week. Spiritual stagnation, poor and destructive decision making, timid faith, loneliness, and so much more begins to change in our lives when we make the time to read God's word and listen for His voice.

Thank you for reading God's word today. Continue to turn the pages of this devotional daily and let the power of God's word transform you just it has done for Israel and many millions of believers throughout the centuries.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 12, 2025

Joshua 1:9 by Justin, Brittany, Nolan and Lilah Mae Myers

Joshua 1:9 (NRSV): I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.

"What does courageous mean," we asked our six year old as we reviewed her new vocabulary words for the week. She responded to be brave and get on top of a mountain and yell "I'm the bravest!" My 7 year old chimed in, "to be brave like Captain America or Thomas Jefferson." We all laughed at the range of his examples, but there is some truth to it. Most of the time, when we hear about someone being "brave" or "courageous," we think of fictional characters that saved the day or when you see someone place themselves in a dangerous situation even though they have no control. But God calls us to be brave and courageous in our everyday life. While life's anxieties and worries may feel heavy to carry, God commands us to be strong and courageous because He is with us wherever we go.

While it may be easy to fall into fear, we must remember that God is with us and there is no place for fear or dismay. God is the greatest source of strength, and we can trust him for guidance through life's challenges. During this lent season may be reflect on what it means to live as God commands us without fear or dismay but with bravery and courage knowing that God is with us wherever we go.

May we seek God's presence as our source of comfort and strength as we face the days, especially the challenging days or seasons in our lives. Upon reflection, the six-year-old may be onto something with a one change...let us get to the top of the mountain and yell "because of God and his promises, I'm the bravest!"

THURSDAY, MARCH 13, 2025

John 11:17-44 by Rev. Alan Johnson

⁴⁰ Jesus responded, "Didn't I tell you that you would see God's glory if you believe?" ⁴¹ So they rolled the stone aside. Then Jesus looked up to heaven and said, "Father, thank you for hearing me. ⁴² You always hear me, but I said it out loud for the sake of all these people standing here, so that they will believe you sent me." ⁴³ Then Jesus shouted, "Lazarus, come out!" ⁴⁴ And the dead man came out, his hands and feet bound in graveclothes, his face wrapped in a headcloth. Jesus told them, "Unwrap him and let him go!"

As we continue on the journey of Lent we remember the cross, the grave, and the resurrection of Jesus. And we all know that after the cross, Jesus spends a couple nights in the grave, and then the stone is rolled away. It's a very familiar story to us church people. But Jesus is not the first guy to have such an experience.

In John chapter 11 we find the account of Jesus raising his friend Lazarus from the dead. Lazarus, from all accounts a regular guy, goes completely dark for 4 days and then mummy walks out of his stone-closed grave cave at the command of Jesus. The only special quality attributed to Lazarus is one that is actually not so special...or at least it's not incredibly uncommon or unattainable for any other human. This is incredible, death cheating, grave robbing quality? Lazarus knows Jesus! And like the sheep that follow the Good Shepherd, he hears the Shepherd's voice and obeys the Shepherd's commands!

We don't know much about the life of Lazarus - pre or post his grave walking event. But we know he knew Jesus, and that seems to be enough for him to find life after death. We also know this very real truth...Jesus came to him at his lowest point, and called him out of darkness and into life. I know you and I have a lot of low points over the course of a week, a month, a year, a life...but you can't get much lower than dead. It doesn't get much darker anywhere on this earth other than the grave.

And that's where all this is headed, from the darkness of death into the light of life. So I would ask this simple question...what is the darkness that Jesus is calling you out of right now? Psalm 139 says if I make my bed in Sheol (in the depths, in the pit of hell) You are there. Isaiah writes that the Lord has called you by name.

Whatever your darkness is, it's not too dark for Jesus. However deep into the pit you have fallen, you are not beyond the sound of His voice.

Like the song says: *He called my name, & I ran out of that grave!*

The Lord of all heaven and earth is calling you and I out of darkness and into His marvelous light. So let us be like Lazarus. Let us run out of our graves and straight to Jesus!

FRIDAY, MARCH 14, 2025
Colossians 3:14 by Rev. Shawn Hornsby

Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony.

Whether it's the actual wedding itself or during the premarital counseling, I share this passage of Scripture with every couple that invites me to participate in their special day. Paul writes this passage to instruct the community on how they should treat one another. Of all the things Paul lists, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, and forgiveness, love he elevates 'above all.'

This day, a Friday in the middle of March, do not forget the importance of love. Undoubtedly, some of you reading will have plans for the day that you have looked forward to. Personally, I love Fridays because they are filled with plenty of time for piddling and going to the gym and other forms of self-indulgence. As I read Scripture, including this passage, I am constantly reminded that Biblical love goes well beyond our Southern predisposition to manners and all things nice. Love requires a sacrificial effort on our behalf.

Jesus calls us to this deeper understanding when He instructs us to deny ourselves and then shows us how when He denies His own pain and suffering to accomplish the Father's will. Marriage gives us the most intimate relationship for this kind of sacrificial love. However, Paul didn't write Colossians 3 for couples about to take vows and give themselves to one another in marriage. He wrote this passage to the community at large to remind them of what living together in 'perfect harmony' required.

Love may demand something from you today that you didn't plan. Prepare your heart to respond in a way that furthers harmony and says above all things, you have chosen to love.

SATURDAY, MARCH 15, 2025

Psalm 8:3-4 by Rev. Johnny Hankins

³When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained;

⁴What is man that You take thought of him, And the son of man that You care for him?

When I Consider the Heavens

I love looking up at night when the sky is full of stars. I must be honest though, it makes me feel very small. When the Psalmist looked up at night, he asked why would God have anything to do with us "small" humans." (8:3-4)

To understand how small we are let's travel through space for a moment. Think of our Milky Way Galaxy. It is a spiral shaped band of stars stretched out across the heavens. The Milky Way galaxy is our home, and we live in the suburbs of this huge galaxy.

Travel in space is measured at the speed of light. Think of this:

-Light travels at 186,000 miles a second, or 11 million miles every minute.

-The distance light travels in a year is called a light year.

-If we started traveling across the Milky Way in Adam's day at light speed, we would be only one-thirteenth across the Milky Way.

-It is estimated it would take 100,000 light years to cross our Milky Way galaxy.

-Once out of our galaxy the next galaxy is Andromeda considered our closest neighbor.

-It would take us 2 million light years to get there, traveling at 11 million miles a minute.

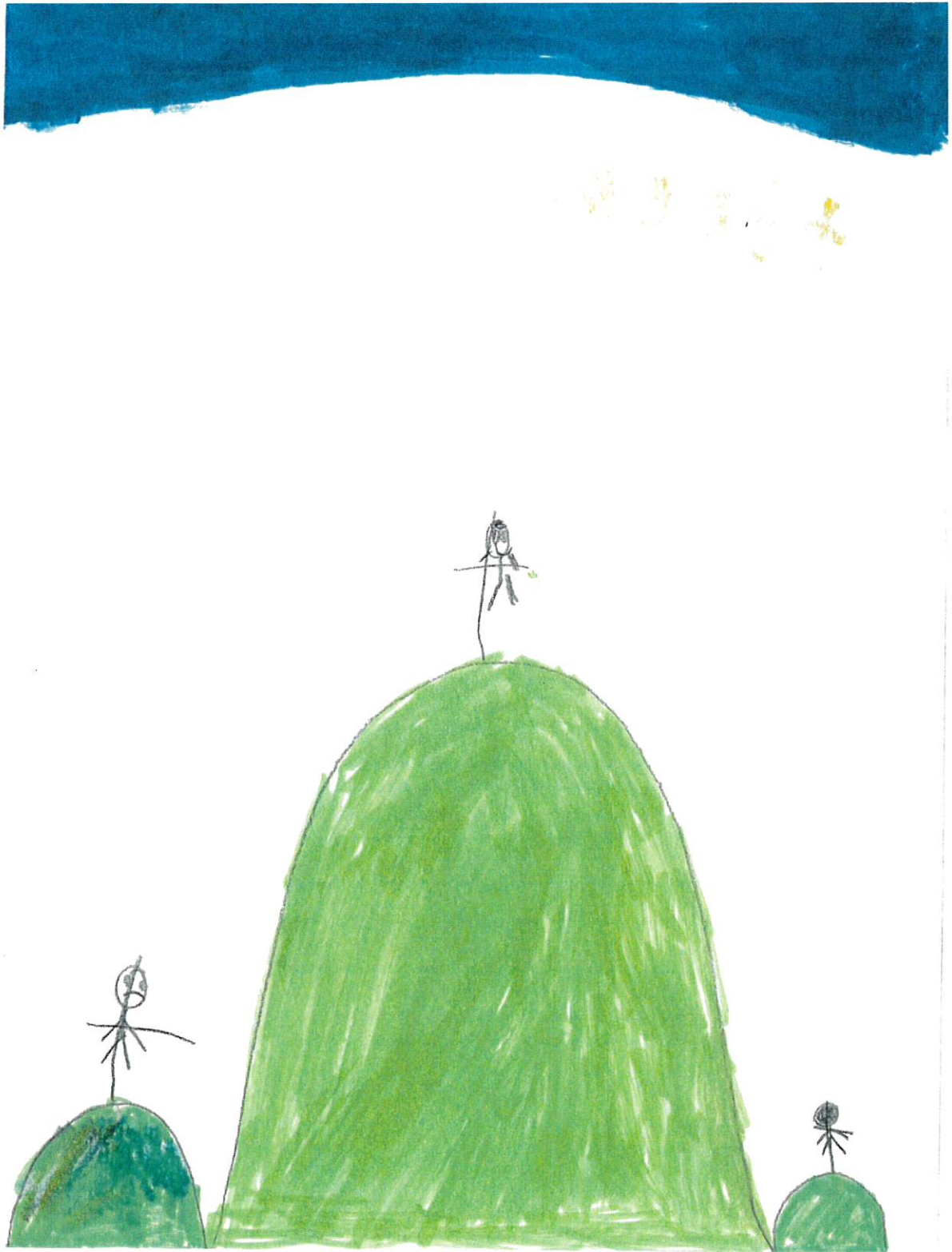
-Our Milky Way is only one galaxy of many in the universe.

-It is estimated that there are more than 100 billion stars in our Milky Way galaxy.

-It is estimated that there are more than 200 billion galaxies in our universe, each with billions of heavenly bodies.

Look up one night in the heavens soon and pray: "Oh Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You are Awesome. You are our Creator. You made us. You are in control. You have a plan, and You love each of us. God, you are as near as You are far! Amen."

SUNDAY, MARCH 16, 2025
Jesus and the Two Thieves by Abram Sistrunk



MONDAY, MARCH 17, 2025

Luke 5:8-11 by Rev. Shawn Hornsby

⁸ When Simon Peter realized what had happened, he fell to his knees before Jesus and said, "Oh, Lord, please leave me—I'm such a sinful man." ⁹ For he was awestruck by the number of fish they had caught, as were the others with him. ¹⁰ His partners, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were also amazed.

Jesus replied to Simon, "Don't be afraid! From now on you'll be fishing for people!" ¹¹ And as soon as they landed, they left everything and followed Jesus.

Lost in the revelry of all things green and Irish dwells the true story of St. Patrick. As people of faith, we desperately need to capture the courage, perseverance, faithfulness, selflessness, and all-around beauty of Patrick's life. Born in Britain around 836, Patrick's grandfather and father served the Kingdom as clergy. Although he was not deeply educated in religious matters, what exposure he did receive would play an important part in early adulthood.

Irish pirates captured Patrick and enslaved him in Ireland where he worked for six years. During his long days of tending fields and serving his master's house, he recited what Scripture he could remember from his childhood until one day he received an unexplainable dream that told him to begin walking. He followed that instruction until he reached the sea where he talked his way onto a ship to get back to Britain. The journey eventually led him home where he convinced his family to educate him in religious studies so that he could return to Ireland and free the island from the Druid influence that plagued the people.

Patrick did return to the place of his enslavement. There, he shared the Gospel, saw many people convert to Christianity, and established a foothold for Christians that lasts to this day. There's more to this remarkable story than can be conveyed on this page. Much like the lives of the disciples who heard the call of Jesus and left their nets to become fishers of men, Patrick left the comforts of his home to confront hostile people with truth and love.

Lord, may each one of us hear the call You have on our lives to leave behind that which is comfortable in order to do that which changes lives for eternity.

"It was not any grace in me, but God that put this earnest care into my heart, that I should be one of the hunters or fishers whom long ago God foreshowed would come in the last days." St. Patrick

TUESDAY, MARCH 18, 2025

Matthew 25:44-45 by Kathy Morrison

44"Then they themselves also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?'

45"Then He will answer them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.'

Little Things

I have always enjoyed doing for others. Some even call me the Brownie lady. Baking, sewing and hand work have always given me great joy to share.

Last year, I was hospitalized for close to three weeks. Visiting two hospitals, taking x-rays and many tests. I was finally released with a long list of meds. One made me really sick and unable to eat or drink, others were later cancelled too. Friends were so frustrated and were sure I needed food. Without my friends and Sunday School Class, only heaven knows what I would have done. I never missed a doctor's visit, medicines, a cleaned house, cleaned refrigerator, cut grass, cleaned out gutters or never even had to replace a light bulb in my closet.

There were many days that passed with me praying to God that I would just be my old self, helping others again. Back to about 90%! Praise God! I am able to do the things I love most.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 19, 2025

John 3:1-21; 7:45-52; 19:38-42 by Jordan Warner

For everyone who does evil hates the light and avoids it, so that his deeds may not be exposed. But Anyone who lives by the truth comes to the light, so that his works may be shown to be accomplished by God. John 3:21

A Moth to the FLAME

With T.V. and social media everywhere, we look there is no shortage of opinions or new ideas that Hollywood or the latest influencer can't wait to support. So many people are telling us exactly how or what we should think. Sometimes it can be hard to think for ourselves. Questioning or disagreeing with the new "it" crisis or the celebrity supporting it would be a monumental social faux pas. Jesus' ministry provoked widespread opposition from the Sadducees and the Pharisee religious leaders. Jesus challenged their authority, called out their hypocrisy, and threatened their power. Nicodemus, a prestigious Pharisee religious leader, hides in the shadows. Something is pulling him towards Jesus. He wants to know more from this Rabbi. This meeting inspired the most well-known words in Scripture. Words that would come to save millions. *"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".* Soon that ping of curiosity would be tested. Nicodemus spoke out on behalf of Jesus *"Our law doesn't judge a man before it hears from him and knows what he's doing, does it?"* (John 7:50) Not only was Nicodemus risking expulsion from the synagogue, but what would his friends think? Still, faith pushed him further.

Once Jesus was crucified, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea stepped out of the shadows. They carried Jesus' body to a new tomb. They decided to give Jesus in his death, what Isreal had refused him, acknowledgment as a King. They buried him in a rich man's tomb with over 70 pounds of myrrh and aloe. Two men who hid in the shadows and kept their faith private fulfilled the prophecy from Isaiah (Isaiah 53:9). So often we are caught up thinking that every thought or good deed must be shared. How will others know unless I tell them? Courage and faith look different on different people in different situations. Sometimes we need to shout our faith from the rooftops. Other times it's best to work quietly to advance God's mission. God works in mysterious ways to accomplish His will.

Prayer: Lord thank you for meeting us where we are. Thank you for finding ways for our strengths and our weaknesses to be a tool for you. Even when we are afraid, you show us how faith can overcome all fears. Keep drawing us to you like a moth to a flame.

THURSDAY, MARCH 20, 2025

Matthew 24:14 by Rev. Shawn Hornsby

"This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come."

How often do you find yourself listening to someone proclaim that the end is near?! Maybe because I am a minister, people like to talk to me about those things more than other folks do. In other words, I hear statements like this all the time. Most of the time, the people who say it have resigned themselves to the fact that everything in the world is the way it is and there's not much for us [Christians] to do but sit back wait for Jesus.

I cannot find any shade of the Gospel that absolves the body of Christ of engaging the world to bring others to Jesus. When we read the verse above, we must ask, "Who is going to preach to the whole world?" I get it, not everyone of you is called to preach. Yet, I don't know a single preacher who does it all on their own. Logistics, support, and prayer are just a few of the ways every Christian can help aid this effort.

Jesus's return requires a thriving, active, disciple making church passionately working to share the Good News to all the people of the world.

Today, take time to pray for the Unreached People Groups of the world. These are ethnic groups of people whose Christian population makes up less than 3% of their people. Also, UPG often do not have any active evangelization happening among their people. Today, there are literally BILLIONS of people who have never heard the name of Jesus in their native tongue and have no one working to bring Good News to them. Church, we have much to do before Jesus returns, let's begin by praying that God will show us how to reach those who have been unreached for far too long.

FRIDAY, MARCH 21, 2025

Isaiah 55:1 & John 7:37-38 by Kathy Telano

Come to the Water

When I was a young girl and would hear the term in church, "come to the water", I thought it meant to go to the river or a well or somewhere containing water. Later I learned it meant, come to God.

Isaiah 55:1- Come everyone who thirsts, come to the waters and he who has no money come buy and eat.

John 7:37-38 - If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. whoever believes in me, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.

Recently the choir sang "Come to the Water". The words are so beautiful, reminding us not only of our baptisms, but about hope for the hurting, the lost, the poor and to those who have nothing.

O let all who thirst
let them come to the water
and let all who have nothing
let them come to the Lord
without money without price
why should you pay the price
Except for the Lord.

And let all who toil
let them come to the water
and let all who are weary
let them come to the Lord
all who labor without rest
how can your soul find rest
except for the lord.

And let all who seek
let them come to the water
and let all who have nothing
let them come to the Lord
without money without strife
why should you spend your life
except for the Lord.

And let all the poor
let them come to the water
let the ones who are laden
let them come to the Lord
bring the children without might
easy the load and light.

Come to the Lord

These words are an invitation to come to God for refreshment and sustenance, symbolized by "water". The idea is that this water is freely available to anyone who seeks it, regardless of their circumstances. All you have to do is accept it as a gift from God.

Pray: O Lord, give us all the water from heaven so we will not thirst again. Amen

SATURDAY, MARCH 22, 2025

Psalm 121 by Pam Hankins

1 I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. 2 My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth.

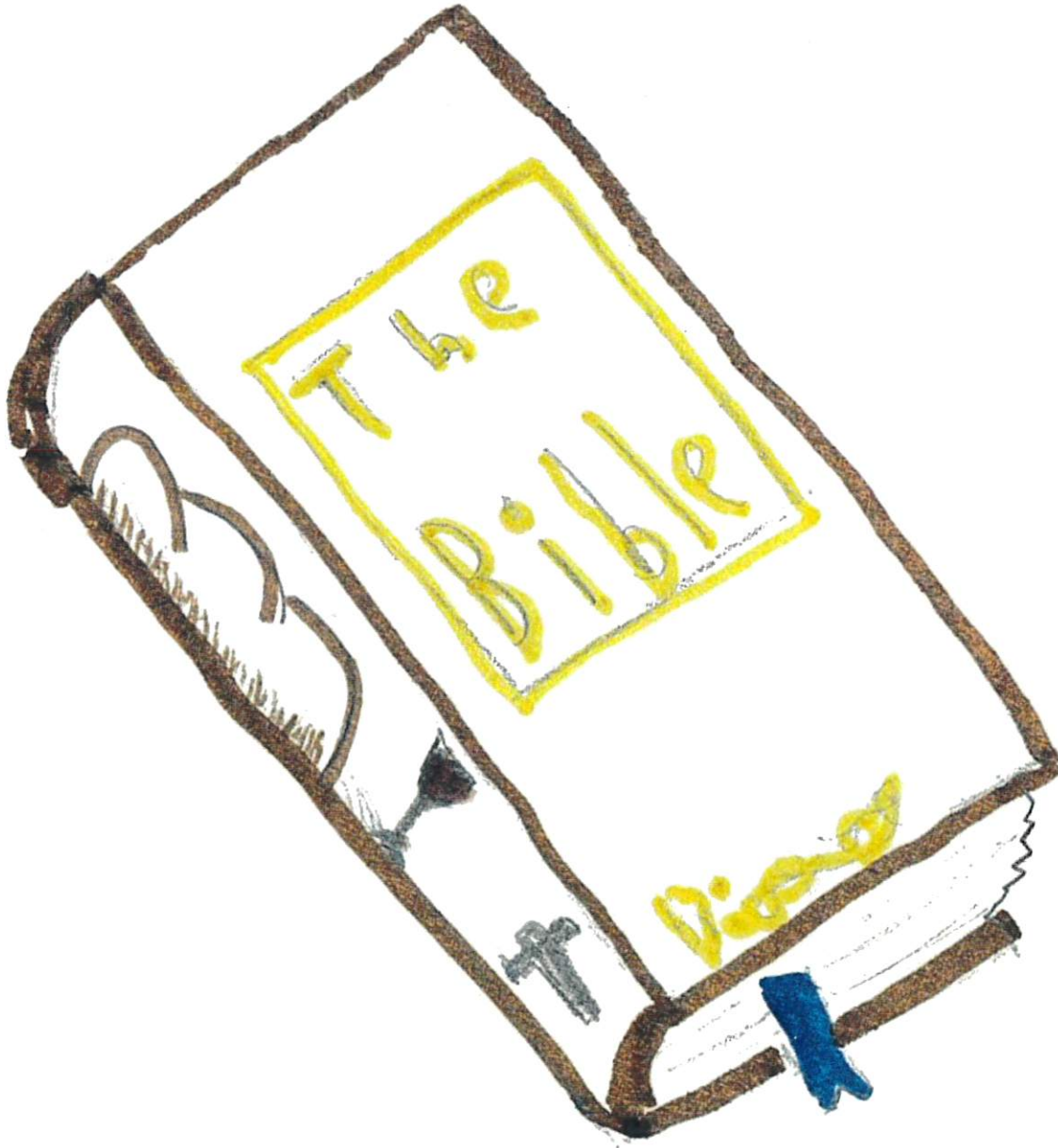
I don't remember which grade I was in when I studied this Psalm in school – probably 5th or 6th. But this passage has always struck a chord with me. Some people love the ocean (or beach) and feel close to God in those settings. Although I enjoy the ocean, too, I LOVE mountains. Because my parents instilled in me a love to travel, I have had the good fortune to visit the greener and gentler mountains of the Eastern US, the higher, rockier, mountains across the Western US, and even Mt McKinley in Alaska, the highest mountain in North America. I dream of someday visiting the European Alps and the Canadian Rockies.

God's majesty is so evident in mountain peaks and ranges. I have a hard time understanding how anyone could possibly be a non-believer when His majesty is there on such magnificent display!

This Psalm is but one reference to God's presence in an upper place (the hills). But so many other Biblical events also take place on mountaintops or hills – Moses receiving the 10 Commandments on Mt Sinai, Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, Golgotha's hill where Jesus was crucified, and the Mount of Olives, where his ascension occurred. I know that God is everywhere, of course, but for me, I choose to look upward for my help in times of trouble.

Thank you, God, for looking down on us and blessing us so richly with your beautiful, majestic mountains.

SUNDAY, MARCH 23, 2025
The Proof by Bryce Nordman



MONDAY, MARCH 24, 2025

Romans 15:13 by Selah Kaufman

Romans 15:13. May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

The Joy of Hope through Faith

My faith journey started in the Methodist Church as a small child singing hymns, attending vacation bible school, washing feet during Lent and lighting the advent wreath candles during the Christmas Season. With my twin sister by my side, our family was very involved in all aspects of the church, and we had a strong relationship with God and were a happy and loving family.

As I grew into a young woman, I fell in love and started a family of my own. We worshiped at my then husband's, lifelong Catholic Church where we were happy and found a home with the people and the church. On Sundays I could feel the Holy Spirit hovering above my head and I would have conversations with God as I gave thanks for my blessings and asked forgiveness for my sins.

Later in our lives, after many years had passed, I found myself as a widow with 2 children and it was a heart wrenching and scary time in all our lives. With the empty and unfamiliar life that became our reality, all I knew to do was to continue and to be strong for my kids and to have faith that God would lead us back to the light. I knew there were many people praying for us and that God was carrying us through those deeply grief-stricken times. Each day I would get up and start a new day with hope, knowing that with prayer and time I would find my joy again and that my children would persevere.

Eventually, I ended up back in the pews of the Methodist Church, giving thanks to God, singing some of the same hymns from my childhood with Joy in my heart and the Holy Spirit soaring above me again. My children are thriving, and I have remarried a beautifully funny man, with a heart for the Lord. I know that only by the grace of God and keeping my faith that I was only then able to find my joy again.

I say all of this for you to have faith in God and trust in his promise. Let his words be your anchor and let his love be your strength and you too can find your Joy in Faith in your relationship with God.

Food for thought: God fills your heart with Joy and Peace. Sometimes you just have to get out of your own way to see it.

TUESDAY, MARCH 25, 2025

Genesis 39:9 by Rev. Shawn Hornsby

"There is no one greater in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?"

Reflecting on our lives, in particular the areas where we have allowed sin to take root, remains one of the significant practices of Lent. In Genesis 39, Joseph tries to remain true to God despite incredibly difficult circumstances. His brothers sold him into slavery, and he now manages the house of Potifar, the head of Pharaoh's royal guard. As if being a slave in a foreign land were not difficult enough, Potifar's wife attempts to seduce Joseph as he is a young and handsome man.

I've always loved Joseph's response to her proposition. He rightfully acknowledges the trust Potifar has placed in Joseph, but not in a way that suggests he owes Potifar. He says, Potifar has withheld nothing in his entire household except for his wife. Then, Joseph asks her how he could sin against God.

Joseph knew that he did not arrive at his place of prominence because of Potifar. He knew that if committed this 'indiscretion,' it would not simply be a violation of Potifar's trust. Joseph knew that to betray his position and the influence it came with would be a great evil against God.

Too often, many of forget, in moments of temptation, that God directs our steps. God provides good things for our lives. God watches over us. Our sins of betrayal do not hurt other people alone. God, who has entrusted us with position, loved ones, influence, prosperity, children, or any other great blessing grieves when cheapen His gift with our own selfishness.

As you consider how you have sinned recently, consider how you may have taken advantage of God's trust. Seek forgiveness and ask that He trust again.

When you find yourself tempted, and we all do, look at what "great evil and sin" you would commit against God if you gave into your temptation.

Joseph rightfully understood the significance of the choice before him. God, grant us such perspective in the moments of our temptation. Amen.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 26, 2025

Titus 3:4-7 by Denise Calhoun

But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we have done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

Charitable thoughts...

Kind words...

Soft actions.

In 2017, I wrote these words on a sticky note and posted them on my computer. I wanted to remind myself regularly, but it is hard.

How often have you been angry only to discover later that you didn't have all the information?

Do you sometimes speak before thinking about how your words may impact others?

Have you been forceful when a softer touch would have been more effective?

Sure! We all have thought, spoken, or reacted wrong because we are all human. We are sinners who must work moment by moment to be better.

But through God's grace, he has made a way for us all through the sacrifice of his son, Jesus.

If we accept his grace, then we must strive each day to be better than before. We know we will sin. We will fall short, but for his gift, we must try!

Start each day thanking God for the new day – the new opportunity to reflect his love and grace for others to see – maybe through charitable thoughts of others; or kind words of encouragement; or with soft, gentle actions of love.

"Father God, thank you for bringing me to a new day. Lord, I seek your guidance in all I do today. Help me show others your love, grace, and kindness. Amen."

THURSDAY, MARCH 27, 2025

Jeremiah 20:9 by Rev. Shawn Hornsby

*⁹But if I say, "I will not remember Him
Or speak anymore in His name,"
Then in my heart it becomes like a burning fire
Shut up in my bones;
And I am weary of holding it in,
And I cannot endure it.*

Until Alan Johnson shared this verse with me in 2024, I must admit that I have never felt much of a connection with Jeremiah's writings. By word count, Jeremiah has the longest single book in the Bible (the Psalms have the most chapters). The book seems to go on and on with a great amount of suffering, injustice, and lamentation. However, this verse strikes a chord with me in a beautiful way.

I realize it sounds a little dramatic to some people when they hear that sharing the Gospel either by preaching, teaching, or conversation feels right. Courtney (my wife) can attest that I spent my late teens and most of my 20s trying to figure out what I should do with my life vocationally. Band director, lawyer, salesman, and accountant, eventually led to minister. When I began helping others learn about God's love and discover His truth for their lives, the professional wandering ceased. I experienced a fulfillment I hadn't known.

Jeremiah finds himself imprisoned by those who reject his messages of conviction and calls to repentance. He suffers at the hands of unrighteous people who ignore his warnings from God. Despite the harsh treatment he endures, Jeremiah cannot keep from speaking God's word. He describes the sensation of saying these hard things to people who do not want to hear them as a fire in his bones. His fulfillment does not come with comforts of life but with obedience to God.

This passage describes the depth of desire to serve God Jeremiah felt. Today, pray with me that your call to serve God would be made so obvious to you that if you tried to deny it, you would burn within your bones. I know that may sound intimidating to you! That's OK.

We should feel a certain amount of uncertainty as we draw closer to the Holy. God's presence should strike awe within us.

In the moment we trust the Lord and quench the burning within our bones, we bring Him the glory He so richly deserves.

FRIDAY, MARCH 28, 2025

Matthew 9:9 & John 10:27 by Theophilus

After this he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth. And he said to him, "Follow me." -Matt 9:9

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. -John 10:27

Lent is a season of reflection. It is a time of reflection on Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection bringing the promise of our salvation. It is also a time to reflect on how we may better live out our faith in light of His glorious gift to us.

I have often thought of big commitments for Lent - to give something up that would be really tough (foods, habits), to read through the New Testament in the 40 days, to double my time in prayer - but lately I've been pondering Jesus' simple invitation to "Follow me." It is uplifting to set big faith goals and work toward them, but "following" strikes me more and more as a set of small steps.

My Christian walk is affected (and reflected) each day by a lot of little things: do I greet people warmly and let them know they are appreciated, do I take time to listen when children are telling me something or is my mind somewhere else, do I take care of something since I am there and see the need or ignore it because it is someone else's job, do I carve out the time to drop by for a visit or call someone I suspect may be in need of companionship?

I know from experience that it is possible to worship Christ without following Him. It is possible to admire Him and rely on Him without following Him....but our invitation is to follow and, by following, to grow closer to Him.

Mother Teresa used to say that we need to look for the small, everyday opportunities to be a light in someone's life because "there are many people who can do the big things, but there aren't as many who will do the small things." This Lent, and beyond, I am looking to give more attention to all of the little areas in daily life where I can more closely follow Jesus.

SATURDAY, MARCH 29, 2025

Psalm 130:5-6 ESV by Ginger Bennett

"I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope; my soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning, more than watchmen for the morning."

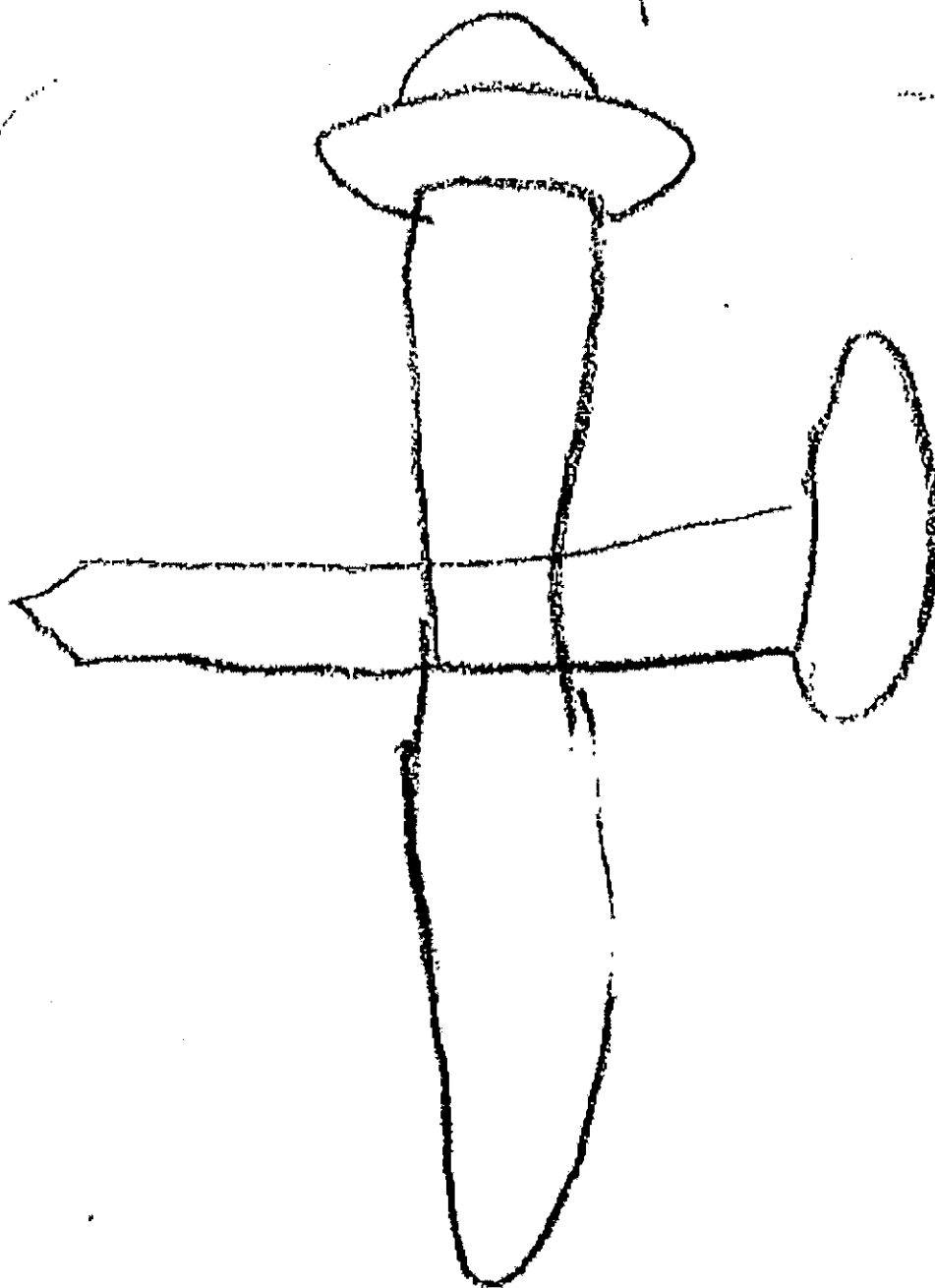
Lent is a season of waiting. To "wait" on something means to anticipate it happening with some level of attention. But, sometimes it can feel like God is silent. We pray and hear nothing. We pray and don't receive the answer in our time frame. When the answer doesn't come soon enough, it's tempting to walk away. Yet, faith leads us to "wait" and rely on God's goodness in the waiting. This is why verse 5 reminds us three times to WAIT. Our waiting may bring yearning, but it also builds our trust in the LORD.

The psalmist is simply proclaiming that He constantly looks to God for His will during the waiting. He is not just patiently waiting, but eagerly waiting to see the response. He compares his waiting to the job of the watchmen. Watchmen have a difficult job; it can be mind-numbing to look out from a post scanning for an enemy appearance. Those on duty overnight would eagerly wait for dawn when their shift ended and they could rest. This is the exact attitude we are encouraged to take as we wait. To wait with hope, because we know the dawn is coming.

So what can we do, as believers, as we eagerly wait on the LORD?

1. *"Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life." Proverbs 4:23 NLT*
2. *"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." Matthew 6:33 NKJV*
3. *"Above all, my brothers and sisters, do not swear—not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. All you need to say is a simple "Yes" or "No." James 5:12*
4. *"I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another." John 13:34*

SUNDAY, MARCH 30, 2025
A Cross of Nails by Baylor Nordman



MONDAY, MARCH 31, 2025

Proverbs 3:5-6 by Peyton Hornsby

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding.
Seek His will in all you do, and He will show you which path to take.*

"If God calls this day into existence with us drawing breath by morning, He's faithful to sustain us in it." - Rou Chou Simons

God will never put us in situations where He isn't there or hasn't already gone. It's easy to wake up in the morning or lie in bed at night and get overwhelmed or discouraged by the tasks that are ahead but let us remember that this is the day the Lord has made. Whether you are facing everyday tasks or new hardships this Lenten season, I want you to be encouraged in the fact that we don't have to have a plan or have it all together. God does that for us.

And as hard as that can be to remember while in the weight of everyday tasks, I encourage you to give it all to Him.

He proves to remain faithful every day with good plans for me and you.

TUESDAY, APRIL 1, 2025

Acts 2:4-7, 13 by Theophilus

All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language?"

Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine."

On Pentecost, the Apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit to proclaim the Good News of Jesus to the gathered people. We don't know what language they spoke that day. They all would have known Aramaic. Some would have likely known Greek. Between those two languages, a majority of the people in Jerusalem would have been able to understand, and those who didn't could have found someone to translate for them.

Instead, these people from various parts of the Roman Empire were amazed because they heard the wonders of God being declared in their own native languages. The Spirit was moving in them as well so that there would be no mistake about the message that was being shared.

Unfortunately, to some of the people, the Apostles' words sounded only like drunken babbling. They had ears to hear, but they were not attuned to the message spoken. In the same way, we need to be guided by the Holy Spirit as we read scripture and as we listen to those proclaiming God's intents. Scripture and interpretation can be challenging sometimes, and we might find ourselves thinking:

- Jesus probably meant that for a specific group of people, not for me.
- That was a long time ago, does this really apply today?
- I don't really agree with that, let me look for a passage I can use to contradict it.

Thoughts like these may be good to ponder and part of critical thinking, but we do need to make sure our questions and challenges lead us to fully seek the truth.

We're told if we seek God with all our heart, He will lead us in the right direction. So, as we read, study and listen, may we always ask the Holy Spirit to open our hearts and minds to understand His purposes and guide us in understanding.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 2, 2025

1 John 2:15-17 by Rev. Shawn Hornsby

¹⁵Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

¹⁶For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

¹⁷The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

Occasionally, I talk with people who have experienced a recent rededication of their lives to Christ. During these conversations, they confess that decisions were often easier when they didn't consider their faith and the implications of Holiness in their lives. They could simply make their decisions, offer advice, or set the direction of their lives based on what seemed easiest or most beneficial to them.

They could make worldly decisions because they lived worldly lives unaware of eternal consequences. Then, without warning, they awaken to God's presence and experience a desire to become Holy as He is Holy (Leviticus). Following Jesus adds a layer of difficulty to life as we realize we should no longer take the most convenient and self-serving path. And consequently, we may experience conflict in relationships as we conduct ourselves in such a manner as to bring glory to God.

What's the upside? I can think of a few comforts in following Jesus. First, He calls us friend when we keep His commands (John 15:14). Second, our example encourages others who may want to follow God and brings God glory (Matthew 5:14). Finally, John reminds us in this passage that those who do the will of God live forever!

If you find yourself tempted to take a moral shortcut today or in the near future, remember John's words about those who love this world and those who love the Father. It probably won't ease the burden of the struggle, but it will raise your gaze beyond your current circumstances. For believers, God does not task us to follow ease and comfort. He calls us to follow Him.

THURSDAY, APRIL 3, 2025

Philippians 4:19 by Denise Calhoun

And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.

The Lord provides...

Starting at a very young age, we are told stories of how the Lord provides. He fed the masses with seven loaves of bread and a handful of small fish. Manna fell from heaven to provide for the daily needs of the Israelites wandering the desert. Daniel survived the lion's den after the Lord sealed the mouths of the lions. Miraculous feats of wonder!

Are you waiting for the BIG miracle in your life before you trust in the Lord?

I think many of us are waiting for just that, including myself in that number. I say that I trust in the Lord to provide, but I push through tough times relying on my strength rather than asking the Lord.

But it is the BIG AND SMALL things. And we do not have to ask in order for the Lord to know our needs. He knew before we even knew!

I was reminded of this just recently. It was Sunday service, and I opened my bible to the scripture printed in the bulletin as I prepared myself for the lesson. Handwritten beside the scriptures was the word "Why?". In an earlier reading, I noted my lack of understanding. Knowing me, I had not stopped to pray for understanding. Likely I had felt frustrated and inadequate that I could not discern the lesson from the passages.

But the Lord provides. He provided a church that feels like home. He provided a pastor with a heart for God who is always seeking his guidance. He provided a way for my understanding!

Small? I think not!

"Lord, thank you for providing my needs. Thank you for your continued grace as I learn to trust in you for all things, big and small. Amen."

FRIDAY, APRIL 4, 2025

Matthew 6:26 by Jordan Warner

"Look at the birds of the air. They don't plant or gather crops. They don't put away in barns. But your Father who is in heaven feeds them. Aren't you worth much more than they are?"

Spring is here. The weather is still as fickle as ever, but if you look around you will see the changing season. Trees are budding, grass is growing, and the birds are everywhere. We have even been blessed by the most beautiful blue bird visiting the church office daily. I can lose track of time just watching birds flitter around the yard looking for something to eat or materials to build their nests with. They never seem worried or tired of their daily task. I think this is what draws people to bird watching or having feeders in their yard. Yes, birds can add a beautiful assortment of colors, and it's fun attracting new or rare species, but I think as humans we crave the simple life they have.

Matthew 6:26 has been my favorite Bible Verse for as long as I can remember. This verse played a monumental role in leading me here to be the Children, Youth, and Family ministry director. Before working for the church, I spent many years in corporate healthcare. I loved it. I loved the thrill of securing new business, helping physicians with the most cutting-edge laboratory testing, and helping patients receive the best care possible, all while making sure my territory's profit margins grew exponentially. The stress of trying to be the best and making an insatiable company pleased was crippling. One night, like many others, I ran into the daycare to pick up my son just moments before they closed. I ran to the soccer field to watch my eldest's soccer game. I spent the entire game on my phone. I realized that my employees and the company got more of me than my family. The next day at work I noticed the note I had left myself "You are worth more than the sparrows". I repeated that to myself often over the years. As the day continued, I kept repeating it again and again. That evening as I was packing up to go home, I tearfully repeated it again. I had never heard the voice of God until that moment. God said "Jordan, do you truly believe that?" I answered yes. He then said to me "If you do, then why are you chasing the scraps?" I knew for a long time that what I was doing was not sustaining. I could not be the mother and wife I wanted to be. I was too afraid to step out on faith and leave. How would we survive? Would we lose our house? That day I quit my job. I didn't ask questions; I had no plans. I knew that if God chose to speak to me then He had a plan. I was asked several months prior to my leaving if I would ever want to work for the church. My response was that it would be a dream, but it was just impossible. Nothing is impossible for God.

Lord thank you for doing the impossible. Your plan for us is always greater than our own. It's a blessing to know that we will forever be provided for because of your love for us.

SATURDAY, APRIL 5, 2025

Psalm 55:2 by Rev. Shawn Hornsby

¹ Listen to my prayer, O God.

Do not ignore my cry for help!

*² Please listen and answer me,
for I am overwhelmed by my troubles.*

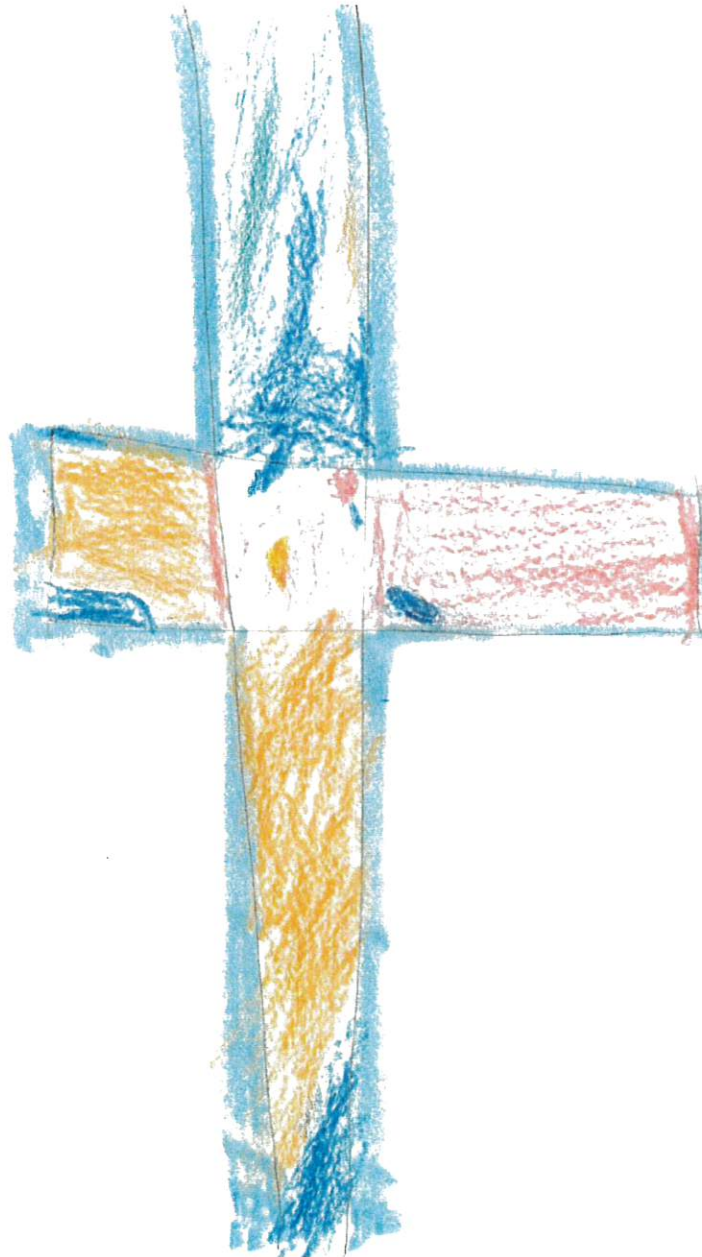
David, surrounded by his enemies and unable to make sense of what he should do next calls out to God to listen. How ironic that in the midst of our troubles we cry out to God as if He were not already intimately aware of every threat and concern we've named...and all of those we know nothing about too!

It's common for us to miss obvious things in life when we feel overwhelmed. In the middle of conflict or suffering, we focus so intently on the problem that we miss the solutions around us. Fortunately, David gave us a solid means of expressing our desperation while still calling on God for deliverance.

I can't imagine that David thought God needed a reminder to focus. Instead, I read this plea for God's attention as an expression of David's anguish. As we draw closer to the cross and the empty tomb, let's remember that God hears our pleas for help just as clearly as he hears our shouts of celebration. The world needs a Church that does not become so overwhelmed by our worries and challenges that we forget to cry out to God. Instead, the world needs a Church that will shout in prayer as troubles arise.

Lord, we pray that trouble will not find us. But if trouble finds us, let us not stop praying and trusting in You!

SUNDAY, APRIL 6, 2025
From the Table to the Cross by Crew Warner



MONDAY, APRIL 7, 2025

Matthew 28:18-20 by Gary L. Stringer

"To be Continued"

People who have been subjected to my teaching in Sunday School know how much I love religious cartoons and comics. I often find them to contain great truths. I am also convinced that laughter and humor are wonderful and amazing gifts from God. Consider just a few of the Scriptures about laughter, happiness, and joy:

Proverbs 17:22 tells that a joyful heart is good medicine. Psalm 126:2 says that our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy. The well-know verse in Ecclesiastes 3 tells us that there is a time to laugh, and Proverbs 15:13 asserts that a glad heart makes a cheerful face.

One of my favorite Easter cartoons is a BC strip with two ants who notice a wooden cross on a hill, and they see a note on the top of the cross. So, one of the ants, after considerable effort, climbs to the top of the cross and reads it. When he returns cautiously to the ground, the other ant asks what did the note say. To this question, the ant replies, "To be continued." As the ants walk away in silence, there is a tomb in the distance behind the cross with the stone rolled away.

No, Jesus did not really leave a note on the cross that stated, "To be continued." However, He could have because what Jesus did on the cross did not end at Easter. What Jesus did on the cross did not end with His ascension back to heaven. No, the act of supreme sacrifice that Jesus freely performed on the cross was just the beginning, and it truly continues now and for eternity for each and everyone of us.

Matthew 28: 18–20. 18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

TUESDAY, APRIL 8, 2025

Job 2:7-9 by Rev. Shawn Hornsby

Then Satan went out from the presence of the Lord and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. And he took a potsherd to scrape himself while he was sitting among the ashes.

Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!"

This scene from Job runs through my mind almost weekly since I read it at the beginning of the year. The grim advice of Job's wife has always been a point of dark humor to remember from this ancient writing, which I've read or listened to dozens of times. However, in the way only the Holy Spirit can, I read her question at the beginning of the year like I was reading Job for the first time in my life.

"Do you still hold fast to your integrity?"

In all my previous readings, I've never considered the weight of her question. Job, an honorable man by all accounts, sat covered in boils surrounded by the debris of his life's work. In this unimaginable series of losses, Job learns of the destruction of his livestock, his servants, and his children only to go on to suffer great boil sores. Yet, Job never sinned. Job never turned away from or cursed God.

His wife sees Him in his brokenness holding on to his integrity. As I look at all that he lost and the way that I've seen so many of us interpret and react to this story over the years, I am convinced that many of us lack a full understanding of integrity. Aside from honor and truthfulness, integrity defines the state of being whole.

Satan argued to God that Job only loved God because of all the blessings that surrounded Job. His prosperity made him one of the wealthiest men in the land! Satan believed that Job's love for God corresponded to the amount of wealth of his lands and livestock, fruitfulness of his servants, and health of his children. When all of that went away, Satan attacked Job's health. He never sinned or cursed God. He grieved. He asked tough questions of God. But, Job did not turn away.

Job's integrity directly related to his faith in and respect of God. Today, ask God how to cultivate within yourself a love and respect of God that goes beyond the blessings you enjoy. Ask God to make your integrity complete in the love and devotion you share with Him.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 9, 2025

Mark 5:25-34 by Jordan Warner

25 A woman who had had a hemorrhage for twelve years, 26 and had endured much at the hands of many physicians, and had spent all that she had and was not helped at all, but rather had grown worse— 27 after hearing about Jesus, she came up in the crowd behind Him and touched His cloak. 28 For she thought, "If I just touch His garments, I will get well." 29 Immediately the flow of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction.

30 Immediately Jesus, perceiving in Himself that the power proceeding from Him had gone forth, turned around in the crowd and said, "Who touched My garments?"

31 And His disciples said to Him, "You see the crowd pressing in on You, and You say, 'Who touched Me?' " 32 And He looked around to see the woman who had done this.

33 But the woman fearing and trembling, aware of what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth.

34 He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering."

Reach out and grab hold.

I cannot begin to count the times I have sat completely at a loss for what I should do next. Life has thrown some curve balls that I was sure I could never recover from. Prayer seemed futile, but the only action I could muster. Why would God fix this? How can I even be helped? In those moments, I felt as if I was reaching for the hem of His garment. The woman in scripture wanted healing. Physically she was sick, but her mental anguish from being deemed unclean for 12 years would be enough to paralyze anyone. Would Jesus help her, touch her? If he did, he would be unclean. How can he teach and heal others if he is unclean? I'm sure all these thoughts flooded her mind. If she reached for the smallest touch, maybe it would be enough. He wouldn't even notice, but Jesus did notice. He asked, "Who touched my garments"? Was he going to reprimand her? Fearfully she told him the truth. Jesus did not respond with anger. He gave her peace. Jesus wants us to know that he doesn't care how we come to Him. Unclean, unworthy, or broken, he wants to be the one we seek. Our problems are never too big or too insignificant for faith to heal us.

Prayer:

Father, help us to seek you to know that when we are broken you are the ultimate physician. Give us faith to reach out and grant us peace for doing so. You alone Lord can heal all wounds.

THURSDAY, APRIL 10, 2025

1 Timothy 2:1-2 by Rev. Shawn Hornsby

"Timothy, my dear son, be strong through the grace that God gives you in Christ Jesus. You have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Not teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others."

2 Timothy 2:1-2

How do you live out your discipleship? Being a disciple of Jesus covers a few key areas. Jesus clearly talked about the importance of following His commands and teachings (Mark 3:35), loving God and neighbor (Luke 10:25-28), not merely avoiding sin but pursuing a holy heart (Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5-7), and of course making disciples. Lately, I feel God has convicted me of this last mark of following Jesus. As a pastor, husband, father, friend, and so on, I continually ask God to show me where I have the influence to disciple others.

When you think about it, helping another person grow in their faith in Christ may be the second-best gift we can give them besides helping them come to faith. In my prayers, I've asked God to show me the few who I can reach out to in this season of life. Jesus practiced a great model of teaching, preaching, and healing to many, but he personally disciplined a much smaller circle of people. Some would limit it to the 12, but we know many others followed Him. I would say that Jesus intentionally narrowed His time even further and personally disciplined three: Peter, James, and John. Which three people could you pray for and listen to? Which three people could you offer counsel and encouragement to? Pray through this day and the next about this simple statement, "Disciples make disciples." Allow God to direct you and live out your call as a disciple of Jesus.

FRIDAY, APRIL 11, 2025

Luke 6:27-28 & Colossians 3:13 by Courtney Hornsby

Have you ever been hurt deeply by someone else? Have you waited for that person to apologize to you or seek repentance for the hurt they caused you?

Lent is a time to search our hearts for any unforgiveness and extend the Lord's mercy to those who may have been hurt or offended us.

It can be hard to admit the difficulty of your own struggles to forgive another person, no matter how big or small the grievance may be. I have personally faced that struggle over the past year and been weighed down by feelings of anger and bitterness for the hurt that has been caused. Those feelings of hurt have been deepened due to a lack of attrition from the person who caused the hurt. Not only have I struggled with forgiveness personally, but I am also witnessing the long-term impacts of what lack of forgiveness over the course of decades can do to multiple generations of a family.

I am praying and reflecting this Lenten season for the grace to see people as God sees them. I do not want to fall into the trap of asking God to change someone else's heart but to change my own.

"But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you." Luke 6:27-28

As we go through these next 40 days, I pray that you will join me in learning to extend forgiveness through God's grace and be freed from the chains that weigh us down.

"Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you." Colossians 3:13

SATURDAY, APRIL 12, 2025

Psalm 23:3 by Denise Calhoun

He restoreth my soul.

As we prepare our hearts this season, this short, simple phrase offers the greatest gift—the promise from God brought forth through his son.

For me, this is a mantra. I repeat it with tears in my eyes and a heaviness in my heart. I repeat it often to remind myself that every misstep can be redeemed - every challenge can be met - every weakness made strong because "HE restoreth my soul".

Studying the Hebrew restores is the verb "shoov". It means to turn; return; take back to what it was before. A more modern meaning is to turn away from sin and turn towards God.

Soul is "nephesh" and means breath. It is used in many ways in the Hebrew language, referring to breathing, refreshing, or being refreshed. Nephesh is used over **700** times in the Bible, often referencing the entirety of the body.

Nephesh is life. God gave us life. God gave us a way to everlasting life through the sacrifice of his son, Jesus. But he also gave us a way to restore my soul daily through fellowship with the Holy Spirit.

Throughout your day today, repeat these words to yourself.

"Father God, thank you for the gift of your Son, Jesus. Thank you for giving the way for our souls to be restored. Lord, help me to live each day in a way that reflects your love. Lord, when I fall short, remind me that your grace remains. Lord, you restore my soul! Amen."

PALM SUNDAY, APRIL 13, 2025

Hosanna by Nolan Myers



MONDAY, APRIL 14, 2025

Luke 8:22-25 by Rev. Shawn Hornsby

22 One day Jesus said to his disciples, "Let's cross to the other side of the lake." So they got into a boat and started out.

23 As they sailed across, Jesus settled down for a nap. But soon a fierce storm came down on the lake. The boat was filling with water, and they were in real danger.

24 The disciples went and woke him up, shouting, "Master, Master, we're going to drown!" When Jesus woke up, he rebuked the wind and the raging waves. Suddenly the storm stopped and all was calm.

25 Then he asked them, "Where is your faith?" The disciples were terrified and amazed. "Who is this man?" they asked each other. "When he gives a command, even the wind and waves obey him!"

Where is your faith? If I were to compose a list of questions or says from Jesus to explain how I approach Lent, this simple question would be at or near the top of the list. This week especially, we should intensify our soul searching as we remember the last days before the cross. Much like the storm, the chaos of the mob, the anger of the authorities, and show of force from the soldiers sent the disciples into a frenzy. They deserted their teacher and friend as He was arrested. Peter abandoned his loyalty pledge to follow Jesus even to the point of death. No calm could be found in of the tumult unfolding...except in Jesus.

Jesus, whether amid crashing waves on the sea or in the hands of His accusers who worked to put Him to death, never panicked. His faith clearly rested in the Sovereignty of God.

Today, ask yourself where your faith has been lately when life gets rough.

Are you the calm one others look to for guidance?

Do you speak with clarity of purpose when others seem to only react to the situation?

Do you turn to God's strength and wisdom before you exhaust your own?

I pray that we all will consider the question Jesus asked the disciples as we continue in this Holy Week. Amen.

TUESDAY, APRIL 15, 2025

1 Peter 5:6-7 by Ginger Bennett

"Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you."

All of us long to be glorified. We long to know that we are significant, and to have others know it, as well. We are made in God's image, and He has built into us the desire to be exalted. But instead of striving for that worldly glory, the Bible teaches us to quit struggling so hard to make it happen, and trust God to exalt us at the right time and place as He sees fit. He's a good Father who loves us; let Him be in charge of bringing us glory.

Jesus showed us how to do that. Jesus is God and yet, when He came to earth, He made Himself nothing. Instead, He became a servant to all. Then, at the right time, the Father elevated Jesus to the highest position in the universe. Peter echoes that idea here in 1 Peter 5:6-7. Why are we so afraid to put on humility toward other Christians? Why does it bother us to live in submission? Are we afraid of becoming insignificant, of going unrecognized, of making ourselves nothing?

"Humility" does not mean weakness or self-hatred. It means a proper appreciation of how we are, in relationship to God. It means strength under control. As C.S. Lewis said, "Humility is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less."

Peter reminds us that we are not humbling ourselves under the hands of our human authorities. No, we are willingly humbling ourselves under the hand of God. When the proper time comes, He will exalt us either here, or in the life to come, or both, to some extent. Our willingness to serve, to make ourselves nothing, isn't a declaration that we are, in fact, insignificant. Our humility in service is a declaration that our mighty God can be trusted to give us all the glory and recognition that we long for when time is right.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 16, 2025

Ephesians 3:20-21 by Rev. Shawn Hornsby

Now all glory to God, who is able, through His mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. Glory to Him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever. Amen!

How big of a dreamer are you? I must admit that I often dream small and that I have been fortunate to have God bring big dreamers into my life. It's not that I don't believe what the Gospels proclaim, 'with God, all things are possible.' It's just that I find myself thinking far more practically than my big dreaming friends. How big is your vision?

Paul ends a beautiful prayer (3:14-19) with this praise of God's power. Essentially, Paul acknowledges that even those among us who can dream big cannot come close to exhausting the power and ability of God. "Infinitely more" reminds me that we can all lean into our imagination when it comes to seeking God's intercession in the world around us. However, Paul names this power of God in the proper context of the church and Jesus who by their very mission exist to bring glory to God (Eph. 1:6, 12, 14; 5). Let us seek to trust and call on more of God's powerful intercession in our lives but only for the purpose of His glory.

As you pray today, where have you half-heartedly prayed for God to act? Let us pray boldly to the One whose strength infinitely exceeds our ability to pray. And let us do so to His glory! Amen.

MAUNDY THURSDAY, APRIL 17, 2025

John 15:14 by Rev. Shawn Hornsby

You are my friends if you do what I command you.

During this entire exchange recorded by John (John 13-15), Jesus gives His disciples a new command: love each other (13:34-35 & 15:17). Jesus loved the world while much of it hated Him. Paul would go on to write in Romans that Jesus gave His life for us while we were yet sinners, thereby proving His love for us. God's love came without condition. However, the friendship of Jesus clearly calls for action. *You are my friends if...*

Jesus calls for His disciples to follow His commands to remain His friends. Some might find that difficult to hear. Why would we need to follow His commands to be called His friends? Shouldn't friendship be unconditional too?

The commands Jesus left for us included not only, "love each other," but also important instructions to "repent" (Matthew 4:17), "love your enemies" (Matthew 5:40-42), "seek first the Kingdom of God" (Matthew 6:33), treat others as you want to be treated (Matthew 7:12), deny yourself (Luke 9:23-34), give to those who cannot give back (Luke 14:12-14), be born again (John 3:7), and much more.

The commands of Jesus bring us into right relationship with God and teach us how to deal with and love our neighbor charitably, fairly, and extravagantly. Friendship with Jesus requires us to re-evaluate what we hold sacred. Jesus causes us to re-consider our motives and take on an eternal, Kingdom perspective to life.

Jesus becomes the friend that everyone wants to be! Today, on this Holy Thursday, remember that Jesus has called us into an incredibly important friendship that will never fail us or betray us. Follow His commands, be a friend to Jesus.

GOOD FRIDAY, APRIL 18, 2025

John 14:5-6 by Gary L. Stringer

I really love religious cartoons and especially those about Easter and Christmas. For years, Harold LaGrone shared religious comics with me. Although people may not realize it, religious cartoons and comics can often provide great Biblical truths.

One of my favorite comics is BC by Johnny Hart. In case you do not know, BC is a stone-age cave man who is depicted as erroneously living with dinosaurs. There is a three-pane cartoon in which BC, who is seated and contemplating the mountains and the sky, comments that he hates the term "Good Friday." His friend asks, "Why?" BC responds, "My Lord was hanged on a tree that day." To this, his friend replies, "If you were going to be hanged on that day, and He volunteered to take your place, how would you feel?" BC quickly answers, "Good." His friend, with a somewhat smug look, turns to walk away and quips, "Have a nice day."

There is great theological truth expressed in this simple cartoon. The truth is we are condemned by our sins, our neglect, our selfishness, and our lack of concern and love, just to name a few (the list continues). Yet, because God loved us so much (John 3:16) that Jesus became human to take our punishment. Just imagine forfeiting heaven to live as a human in this imperfect world of sin and hate. Not only did Jesus become a sacrifice for our sins (John 1:1-5), he also provided a way for us to be with God forever (John 14:6). So, on April 18th of this year, I hope you will remember this simple cartoon and contemplate why it should be called "Good Friday" because of what Jesus did for us.

Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. John 14:5-6 (NIV).

SATURDAY, APRIL 19, 2025

Psalm 22:1-2 by Rev. Shawn Hornsby

*My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?
Far from my deliverance are the words of my groaning.*

*O my God, I cry by day, but You do not answer;
And by night, but I have no rest.*

From the misery of the cross, Jesus cried out to God the opening line of Psalm 22 for all to hear. For those Gentiles in the crowd, this cry probably sounded like despair and abandonment overtook Jesus. However, those who know this Psalm understand that it carries with it a very different tone from beginning to end.

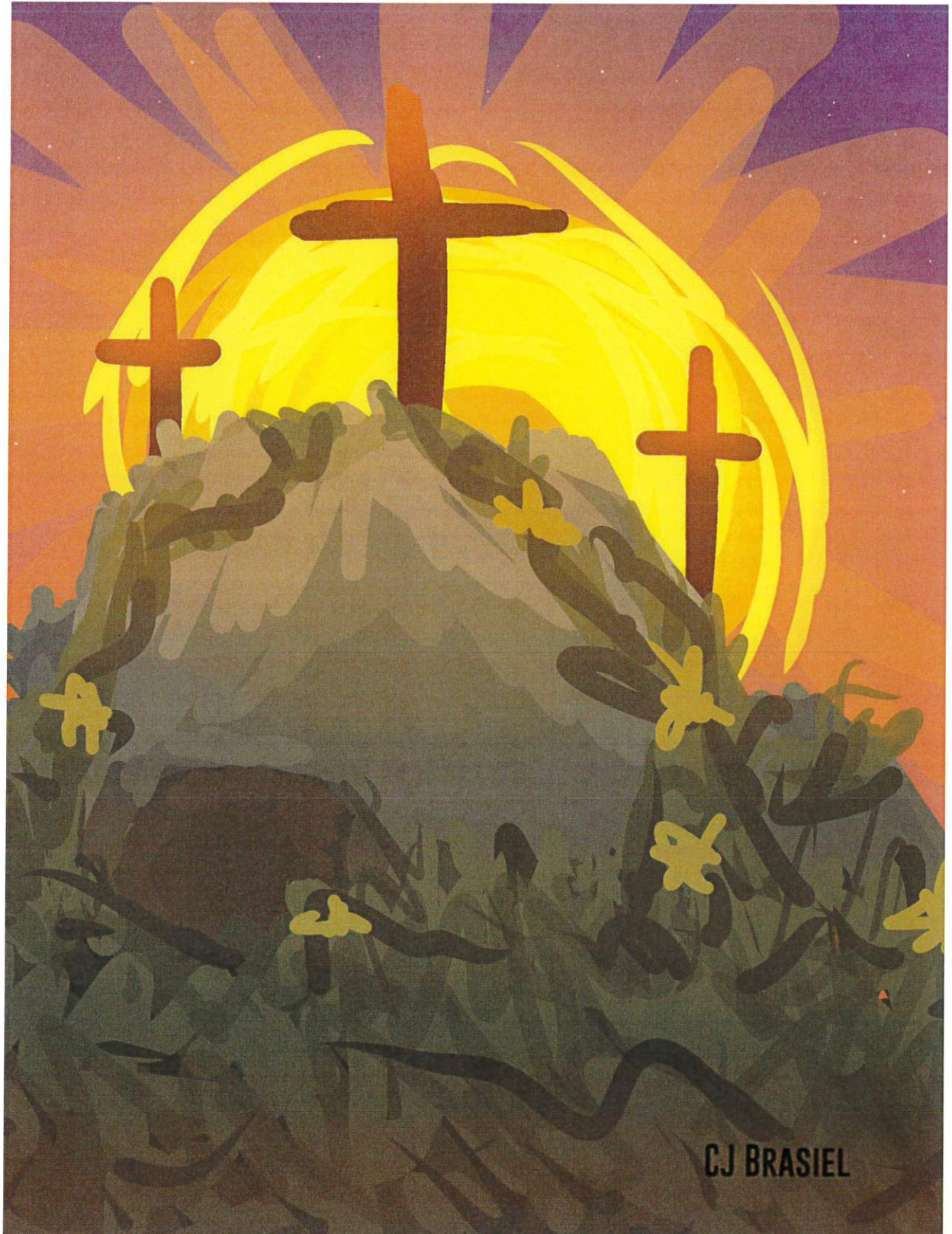
The Psalmist tells of the evil that's fallen upon him. But by the end, the Psalmist shifts to the glorious triumph of God.

*I am poured out like water,
And all my bones are out of joint;
My heart is like wax;
It is melted within me.
My strength is dried up like a potsherd,
And my tongue cleaves to my jaws;
And You lay me in the dust of death.
For dogs have surrounded me;
A band of evildoers has encompassed me;
They pierced my hands and my feet. Psalm 22:14-16*

*But You, O Lord, be not far off;
O You my help, hasten to my assistance.
Deliver my soul from the sword,
My only life from the power of the dog.
Save me from the lion's mouth;
From the horns of the wild oxen You answer me. Psalm 22:19-21*

Even at the darkest moment, Jesus knew that He was not abandoned. He knew that God would deliver Him from the heinous death pending as He drew each painful breath. Today, let us give thanks that Jesus endured the cross for us. Let us pray that we too will endure faithfully so that others will see Christ in us.

EASTER SUNDAY, APRIL 20, 2025
Resurrection by CJ Brasiel



LENTEN DEVOTIONAL 2026

"This is the day the Lord has made;
Let us rejoice and be glad in it."

Psalm 118:24

Now that you have finished this Lenten Devotional, will you prayerfully write down what God has revealed to you? We have included a simple guide for you below. Include your voice in our 2026 Devotional and pass the blessing of God's word on to others as it has been passed on to you.

Choose 1-3 verses that have a message you want to share.

Scripture:

Reveal your experience and message taken from your Scripture choice. Try to keep it around 200 words.

Message:

Finally, give your reader an opportunity to respond. Encourage them to repent, pray, reflect, act, serve, read, sing, preach, rest, etc. God's word should transform us in some small way. Try to keep this to about 50 words or less.

A Call to Respond:

Share your devotional: pastorshawn@mcguiremc.org