

**St. Johns United Methodist Church**  
**March 2, 2022 - April 16, 2022**

**Our Church Family**  
**Devotions for Lent**



**Stewardship**

*God has given us resources or talents  
which we are responsible for managing.  
Study and enjoy these devotions to learn  
how others are managing their talents.*

**Lent and Easter**

In the seasons of Lent and Easter, the church focuses on remembering, retelling and participating in the story of the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Lent, the period of 40 days before Easter (excluding Sundays), begins on Ash Wednesday and ends at sundown on Holy Saturday, the evening before Easter.

During Lent, we enter into a season of preparation, self-reflection and repentance when we seek to literally “turn around” and realign our lives and focus toward God. It is a time to give up things as well as take on new life-giving practices, helping us rid ourselves of distractions and our own selfish desires. By doing so, we seek to live and love as more faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.

The Easter Season, also known as Eastertide or the Great Fifty Days, begins on Easter Day and ends on Pentecost. Focusing on Christ's resurrection and ascension and the sending of the Holy Spirit (Pentecost), Eastertide is the most joyous and celebrative season of the Christian year. We celebrate the good news that in Christ's death and resurrection we, and all creation, are continually being made new by God's love and saving grace.

**Note:**

There are pages in the back of this devotional to allow you to make notes.

What spiritual gems do you derive from these devotions?

Jot down what the devotion says to you as briefly as you can.  
Go back and read these and discover how meaningful they are.

**Ash Wednesday**  
**March 2, 2022**

*A Litany for Lent*



We fast from judging others,  
but feast on patience.

We fast from apparent differences,  
but feast on unity of all life.

We fast from words that pollute,  
but feast on words that affirm.

We fast from complaining,  
but feast on appreciation.

We fast from bitterness and anger,  
but feast on forgiveness and mercy.

We fast from discouragement,  
but feast on hope.

We fast from suspicion,  
but feast on trust.

We fast from idle gossip,  
but feast on purposeful silence.

We fast from problems that overwhelm,  
but feast on prayer that strengthens.

**March 3, 2022**

**Matthew 5:14 "You are the light of the world"**

Sometimes when we seek to help another person, God sends a special blessing our way. This is my story of such a blessing.

When I paused at the doorway to his hospital room, the old country preacher looked at me with sparkling blue eyes centered in a face bathed in a toothless smile. When I introduced myself as the volunteer chaplain for the day, his smile widened, and he motioned for me to pull a chair close to his side. He began speaking immediately. I sat there listening intently to catch every word for he spoke in a low, hushed tone about preaching hard for several years and of his desire to continue. Then he said to me, "I can't do it anymore, for I've lost my wind". I sat a half-hour with him that day drinking from the spiritual fountain that flowed from his heart. He spoke of the many people, young and old alike, that stood in need of the Good News of Jesus Christ and how he wished he could help them. At that moment, I was one year into my first appointment, and I sensed that God had sent me to him that day to have him minister to me. We prayed together with each of us sensing our meeting had been orchestrated by God. I left that long day with new energy in my step and a heart filled with gratitude knowing that my ministry to him had been greatly surpassed by his ministry to me.

Prayer: Thank you, Lord Jesus, for the many people whose light you brought to their hearts has shined in our lives. Amen

Pastor Bob Romanello

**March 4, 2022**

I would like to share this devotional regarding Bravery.....

***Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you. -----Deuteronomy 31:6***

IT'S ALRIGHT TO BE HUMAN. When your mind wanders while you are praying, don't be surprised or upset. Simply turn your attention to Me. Share a secret smile with Me, knowing that I understand. Rejoice in My Love for you, which has no limits or conditions. Whisper My Name in loving contentment, assured that *I will never leave you or forsake you.* Intersperse these peaceful interludes abundantly throughout your day. This practice will enable you to attain a *quiet and gentle spirit*, which is pleasing to Me.

As you live in close contact with Me, the Light of My Presence filters through you to bless others. Your weakness and woundedness are the openings through which the *Light of the Knowledge of My Glory* shines forth. *My strength and power show themselves most effective in your weakness.*

*For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. 2 Corinthians 4:6-7*

Shawne Heeren

**March 5, 2022**

Psalm 147: 8-9 NIV

"He covers the sky with clouds; he supplies the earth with rain and makes grass grow on the hills. He provides food for the cattle and for the young ravens when they call."

I recently took Elisabeth to see the Grand Canyon for the first time. We were both in awe standing on the cliff and wondering just how far away the other side was, or how deep the canyon went below us. Such a site to see!

As most of you probably know, I am a golfer. Very few moments in life get better than being out on a golf course, super early, before the dew dries and seeing your footsteps in it. It's the smell of the fresh cut grass, the slight crispness in the air as the sun starts to rise. I've had the privilege to play some amazing golf courses in my life.

We recently had some work done in our backyard and we decided to include a birdbath and some feeders. We often find ourselves looking out the window wondering what kind of bird may be in the bath, or how many. They range from the smallest birds you can imagine to doves that wait below the feeder for food to drop.

As I've gotten older, it's times like these I pause to give thanks to God for all His works and creation. I don't know what it is but getting older in life causes me to reflect on the natural beauties and wonders of Earth more and more often. If He can take care of cattle and ravens, He can certainly take care of us. Put down the electronics and open your eyes to all God has done in and around you!

Prayer: Dear God, Thank You for taking care of us just like the beasts and ravens of the world. Help us to pause and enjoy all the beauty that is around us.  
Russ Williamson

**March 7, 2022**

**"Jack of All Trades, Master of None"**

You have probably heard this figure of speech before. My father use to say this all the time about himself when I was growing up. It was kind of a compliment in that if you were called this, you were a person that was good at fixing things or had a lot of general knowledge but not mastered any specific trade. He would fix things around our house, fix things for our neighbors, fix things for friends and fix all kinds of things at church and for our church family.

He would tell me that since he was a "Jack of All Trades" he would use his ability in the Service of God helping out where needed. He taught me how to be a "Jack of All Trades" and encouraged me to use my skills to help others and be in the Service of God, just like him.

I have learned quite a bit from my father and even more since he has passed on. I would like to think that I am using my skills for others in the Service of God, just as he did. I too have worked with my son to be a "Jack of All Trades". I know that my son is using his skills for others as well. He is also working with his son in the same way. This is just one of many ways to be in the **Service of God**.

Rick Diak

**March 8, 2022**

Don't you know you are too late?

The wedding starts at 2 PM. It says so right there on the announcement. Your bride-to-be carefully reminded you last night at dinner. Now it is 2:30. Are you too late? Maybe not but there will be a price to pay. Did your mortgage payment arrive at the bank a week late? Late again! It will be OK, but there is a price to pay. Maybe you got to work 30 minutes after start time, and you are late for a meeting where everyone meets the new boss. You make a less-than-grand entry, and she is sure to remember you. Are you too late? They do say that first impressions are important... Will everything be OK, probably, but at a cost.

For us, we want to avoid being too late. Accepting Christ as your Lord and Savior should not be put off. Missing Heaven for eternity is a very high price to pay. Each of us has many opportunities to accept Jesus and live with His presence in our daily life. Don't waste them. You could be like the man on the cross with Jesus who asked to be remembered when Christ came into His kingdom. Jesus told him, "You will be with me in Paradise." We may not have that chance. Change now so you don't hear, "You are too late."

**Luke 23:42-43:** Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." He replied, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

Bill Davies

**March 9, 2022**

Psalm: 46:10-Be still and know that I am God

I want you to close your eyes. Think of your favorite memory-

When Russ was 16 years old, he was involved in a car accident that left him careening straight for tree. Right before impact, flashes of memories scrolled across his conscious- memories as a child with his parents to times spent with friends during his youth.

As we get older, these memories are what bring us comfort as we face our own mortality and that of our loved ones.

Yet, there are times we miss the special moments that create these comfort memories. How many times do we fill the quiet/stillness of our lives with back-to-back errands or mindless scrolling through the internet- running down rabbit holes that leave us pondering how we arrived in the black hole of useless information.

How many times have we missed opportunities to make memories? Would your favorite memory have been missed?

As for me, my favorite memory (outside of Reese's birth or marrying Russ), was as a child sitting on the floor of my grandparent's home with my family around me, stuffed on Christmas candies made by my favorite aunt and my Christmas gifts unopened with all the possibility of their contents swirling in my head.

I encourage you today to STOP. Don't fill the SILENCE. Let yourself be STILL. Allow yourself to be filled with the breath of GOD. Don't miss the Memories.

Prayer: Father God, help me to be still as you fill me with your Love.

Elisabeth Williamson

**March 10, 2022**

**SHELTER FROM THE STORM**

Submitted by Heidi McDonald

As I sit and reflect on the past 2 years, I cannot help but feel like, "Wait did all of those crazy things really happen?" I, like everyone else had my life turned upside down by the craziness of the past 2 years. My children's lives were affected with trips not taken, friends not seen, milestones that looked very different and sleepovers not had. My work/life balance met new challenges as I navigated having my home become my office in a matter of days. I also had worry for my husband who had to go to work and be in the thick of things every single day and wonder if he would be ok and safe and if we would be safe too? I worried for my parents, who live far away if were they doing all the necessary things to stay safe? Life is full of uncertainty and yet the past 2 years took uncertainty to an entirely different level. I found myself relying on my faith and the scriptures that have brought me comfort to help get me through this new storm. We all have those moments of why me, why us, or why is this happening? So, what do we do when the storms of life seem to take over?

**"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." (Jeremiah 29:11)**

The context from the bible shows these words were spoken when people were amid hardship and suffering under Egyptian rule and being forced into exile much like so many are feeling today. Whether it is the loss of a loved one, or the loss of a job, or their own health being affected so many are dealing with hardship, and/or suffering or loss. It can seem so overwhelming, and we are not human if we do not ask "Why?" At times, the past 2 years have even felt like an "exile" of sorts, one where we could not be with loved ones or friends, or even be allowed to enter our own places of work or worship. It was alienating and it impacted everyone. The heaviness was palpable.

God's response is not to provide immediate escape from the difficult situation. Rather, God promises that he has a plan to prosper them during their current situation.

Christians facing difficult situations today can take comfort in Jeremiah 29:11 knowing that it is not a promise to immediately rescue us from hardship or suffering, but rather a promise that God has a plan for our lives and regardless of our current situation, he can work through it to prosper us and give us a hope and a future. Furthermore, Christians can take comfort in knowing that God promises to be there for us in these situations. What can we do to feel closer to God?

Actively read the word of God, take a few quiet moments each day and reflect and follow the commands he puts on your heart. Go for a walk and have a conversation with God. Let him know what is in your heart and what burdens are weighing on you. **"Let GO and let GOD"**. God has shown us that even when we sin against him, his love is constant, and his shield of protection is always there. Appreciate the beauty around you and all the blessings in your life. It is so easy to get weighed down by the "bad"; we often forget to reflect on all the good. Another great way to feel closer to God and feel better about this crazy world is to pay it forward, do something for someone else without expecting anything in return.

**March 10, 2022 (Continued)**

Use your gifts that God has given you to brighten someone else's day. You never know how much a kind word may mean to someone or how much they may need to hear it. I know everyone is familiar with the Poem "Footprints in the Sand", but I am including below as I feel it is a good reminder that no matter what storms we are facing to believe that God is always with us, beside us, or carrying us through the storms ahead. If he leads us to it, he will see us through it.

**Footprints in the Sand**

One night a man had a dream. He dreamed he was walking along the beach with the LORD.

Across the sky flashed scenes from his life.

For each scene he noticed two sets of footprints in the sand: one belonging to him, and the other to the LORD.

When the last scene of his life flashed before him, he looked back at the footprints in the sand.

He noticed that many times along the path of his life there was only one set of footprints.

He also noticed that it happened at the very lowest and saddest times in his life.

This really bothered him and he questioned the LORD about it:

"LORD, you said that once I decided to follow you, you'd walk with me all the way. But I have noticed that during the most troublesome times in my life, there is only one set of footprints. I don't understand why when I needed you most you would leave me."

The LORD replied:

"My son, my precious child, I love you and I would never leave you. During your times of trial and suffering, when you see only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you."

*Author: Margaret Powers*

**March 11, 2022**

**March 12, 2022**

Each year during the holiday season, I always smile to myself when I hear Mallory explain during the Children's time that Christmas is not her favorite holiday of the year, but instead Advent is her favorite. Christmas, while a wonderful day, is too short of a holiday as it is just one day but Advent is an entire season filled with hope, excitement, and anticipation.

To me, this is what the Season of Lent is all about. Easter is a wonderful holiday, but it lasts for just one day. Lent, on the other hand, is a season of 40 days and 40 nights where we are all given the opportunity to take stock of ourselves and our relationship with Christ, and to ask ourselves if we are doing all that we can to prepare for the return of our Savior.

When I was a child, I always understood Lent as a season of "giving up" something we liked as a personal sacrifice to God. Typically for my brothers and me, this meant no candy during lent. Of course, being the creative youths that we were, we often did the math and would often wonder that since there were more than 40 calendar days between Ash Wednesday and Easter, does that mean "cheat" days are allowed? Are Sundays a part of Lent? How about St. Patrick's Day??

I will let you decide that one for yourself, although I must confess to consuming a few sugary treats on more than one Lenten Sunday.

My parents also insisted that we attend Stations of the Cross each Wednesday at church during Lent. This again was not my first choice of Wednesday evening activities, but I grew up in a household in which if Mom and Dad said we were doing it, then we were doing it. No questions or debates were ever heard on the topic.

As an adult, I have come to appreciate Lent as a time to "take on" a task that can bring me closer to God, and to "remove" an obstacle that gets in the way between God and me. I have found the addition of the 5:09 prayer time to be an excellent way to bring myself closer to God, and "giving up" an evening adult beverage to be a simple sacrifice to remove an obstacle between God and me. I again must confess I am not 100% perfect in following these two tasks, but this is a simple way for me to expand my Lenten journey as I prepare myself for the excitement and joy of Easter.

My challenge to all who are reading this is to ask yourself a simple question: During the season of Lent what action can I take to bring me closer in my relationship to God and what obstacle can I remove that is preventing me from a closer relationship with Him?

Steve Siebert

Jesus is The Vine: our Life Source; John 15: states "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. **Abide in me**, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you **abide in me**. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever **abides in me** and I in you, you will bear much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. ...

To abide in Christ means to **keep in close, daily contact, show Christ your love and obedience, by praising and honoring Him every day.** It is simple, Christ wants a relationship with us, that is personal and true. We must turn every part of our lives over to Him and stay close to Him in all situations. As we enter this time of Lent focus on abiding in Christ by building a deep and loving relationship with him. Humble yourself to do good and share Christ's love so others who may not know Christ will see him in you.

Debbie Rouse

Illustration by Piper Burns



## March 14, 2022

Note: This Lenten Devotion was written by my mother – Alice Silvey Calk after reading an article by Maj. Gen. John B. Medaris (U.S. Army Retired) titled "Wait! Wait for God's Love" in Lenten Guidepost in 1969. Maj. Gen. Medaris, author of Countdown for Decision, wrote of his journey to his acceptance of Jesus Christ as his Savior.

As written by my mother:

### DECISION: "WAIT, WAIT FOR GOD'S LOVE"

I want to add my personal experience for finding "God's Love". As I waited on my hospital bed in Self Memorial Hospital in the Fall of 1956 following our serious road accident that had taken the lives of my husband and youngest daughter, Jeanette, during that trying hour of sickness and recovery, the great hour of decision came to me.

Through the hours, days and weeks following the accident, my family, friends, and loved ones had prayed, hoped, and waited anxiously for some sign of (my) recovery. But as time went on nothing seemed worth-while to endure the pain and discomfort.

Members of my husband's family had taken over, keeping the children together, had the business running, and the children in school. My sister, after being by my bedside for several weeks, had to return to her Western Kansas home and her teaching job with little hope for any type of recovery for me.

The doctors and hospital staff were doing everything known to the medical profession to aid my recovery but no progress was being made. Dr. Jack (Scurry) had even asked for a seldom broken restriction to be lifted and give the small children a chance to visit me in my hospital bed to try and arouse a desire in me to get well. But still not responding to happenings around this time went on until one day after a visiting Pastor had stopped to visit in my room, suddenly everything seemed all right. It was as if the Sun was shining through the cloud after a dark and dreary stormy night. I realized I had been spared for a job, to educate and make a home for the children. I must hasten to get well to relieve my loved ones the burden of my recovery.

## March 14, 2022 (Continued)

After a long struggle Dr. Jack gave me permission to try to learn to walk again. He felt my leg had knit well enough to partially support my weight. He also said he felt it was not what he as a physician nor the hospital staff had done that had made it possible for me to walk, but that it was "God's Will".

A number of years have passed and many times I have needed to ask God to guide me in decisions. Recently after the marriage of my youngest daughter I felt my battle was over, that my work was done, and I could slow up; each daughter has a loving husband and also have several wonderful grandchildren and the need to strive on forcefully was not needed. One day God seemed to want to awaken me to a new task "The Need of Others"; not only to my family, but to the sick, the hungry and despondent around the world. Today the future is much brighter with the desire to Witness for Christ wherever He guides me. Again, as Major Gen. John B. Medaris said, I think my experience gives me the right to say to any troubled, uncertain, doubting person "Wait".

### PRAYER:

Our Heavenly Father, help us to look through the fog of our suffering, to see the plan Thou hast for us. Help us to be diligent in fulfilling our work. Help us to win other for Thee by praying each day for those we know who do not know Thee as personal Savior, friend and guide. Give us wisdom to say the right word to the right person at the right time. Amen

Submitted in loving memory and much thankfulness to my mother,  
Alice Silvey Calk – Born 8/25/1908 – Died 8/2/1970

by Frieda Calk Price



**March 15, 2022**

Much of what I believe is the result of how I was brought up and the influences of my mother, my grandmother, and my wife.

In my childhood and youth, attending church and church functions was a foregone conclusion and not up for debate. I trusted my mother. She fed me daily and made sure I knew the difference between right and wrong. She expected me to behave at all times. She never told me something she didn't believe herself, especially when it came to the church: she believed all Methodist ministers walked on water – some just better than others.

As I have gotten older, I have questioned just about everything the church, and Mama taught me. I'm not sure where this "questioning" came from, but I think it is rooted in a natural curiosity about the world around me – and the knowledge that not everything was or is as it seems.

John Wesley preached and wrote that we come to our faith through scripture, tradition, reason, and experience. Candler and Duke Divinity schools refer to this as the "Wesleyan Quadrilateral". Tradition serves to reinforce an idea of order and stability that I need to operate each day. I think people tend to sit in the same pews each Sunday as a response and need to maintain order in their lives. At my present age, I especially enjoy the hymns that were sung when growing up, mostly from the Cokesbury Hymnal. I can still hear my grandmother singing "Take the Name of Jesus with You" as the traditional benediction at the end of Sunday evening services in South Georgia.

Lent is that time each year when we have the opportunity to bind ourselves to scripture and tradition. The reason we do this is to prepare for the coming of Easter by celebrating a time of repentance, almsgiving, and fasting. These acts have a history dating back centuries (many practices today tie us to the early church and evolutionary rituals: think of the ways we celebrate Communion and Baptism). By repeating these Lenten acts, we repeat the traditions of the church that are the opportunity to attend our spiritual growth just as it was done in generations past. I've tried fasting on Fridays, almsgiving, or giving up something and, as I write this, those times and my sense of relationship to God come to memory and I experience those same feelings all over again. It's like sitting in the same pew or singing a familiar hymn. These Lenten acts have to give meaning to us, which suggests discipline. This can be difficult at times, but I think it necessary to gain spiritual insight. Stay the course and don't give in to the temptation to stop or, if you forget, to not restart.

What I gave up for Lent is known only to me and God, but it was rooted in what a former minister once stated in a Lenten sermon: give up "that which controls you the most". It was more than chocolate. Selah.

Prayer:

Bless me, O God, that I may be strong in my faith, my witness, and grateful for each day that beckons me. Prepare me. Amen.

Les Spencer

**March 16, 2022**

**Psalm 106:1 (King James Version)**

**"Praise ye the Lord. O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good; for his mercy endureth forever."**

Many times, I have left our church, St. John's UMC, with the words, "Praise the Lord, Praise the Lord" and a tune playing over and over in my mind. I knew the words and tune came from a hymn, but for a long time I didn't know the name of the hymn or the rest of the words. Eventually I learned the hymn is "To God Be the Glory." Now I enjoy singing the entire hymn which gives praise to God for great things He has done.

Daily I give thanks to God for my many blessings: good health; the ability to get myself out of bed and walk and talk and take care of myself; a house to live in where I am safe and dry and warm in winter and cool in summer; clean water; a good family; an excellent church with many good people; an outstanding pastor; abundant food and clothes; a reliable car; good friends to share good times; the ability to do some things to help other people. I know there are many people in this world who don't have such blessings.

**Prayer:** I thank God for the life and ministry of Jesus and for his death on the cross and his resurrection so that we might have forgiveness of sins, salvation, and eternal life.

By Carla Vowell

**March 17, 2022**

**Matthew 10:32-33 NKJV**

"Therefore, whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven."

We are always eager to share stories about our grandchildren, children, our accomplishments, etc. at every opportunity with much ease. Why is it so hard for some of us to share our faith in God with others? Are we afraid of rejection, criticism, or being embarrassed?

We should be proud of our relationship with God and stand ever ready to share how He is working in our lives. God is loving, powerful, merciful and our perfect Father. We shouldn't be ashamed to share Him!

I was blessed for 45 years to watch how humbly my husband, Tom, lived his life with full faith in God, always willing to share God's word with others. He continued to witness to his doctors and nurses right up until his final days. You see, Tom knew who he was, but more importantly, he knew **whose** he was. He was at peace and most thankful for his salvation and his lifelong relationship with God. He knew he was going to have eternal life with Jesus, the precious gift offered to all. Let us share that blessing with those outside the walls of our church and let them see God's love through us and our actions. I heard the following statement in a Bible study I attended on evangelism: "You can't be close to Him on the inside if you don't acknowledge Him on the outside"

**Prayer:**

Dear God,  
Please continue to equip us to share our faith in You with others outside the walls of our church. We thank You for the opportunity to attend Sunday school, church, and Bible studies to learn more about Your word and how to witness to others. As we grow in our relationship with You on the inside, let us be willing to share how you work in our lives with those outside in our community. We ask you to help us feel at ease in spreading Your word through how we live our lives. Let us be the light in this broken world.

In Your holy name we pray. Amen  
Karen Vinson

**March 18, 2022**

**Matthew 11:28-30:** "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

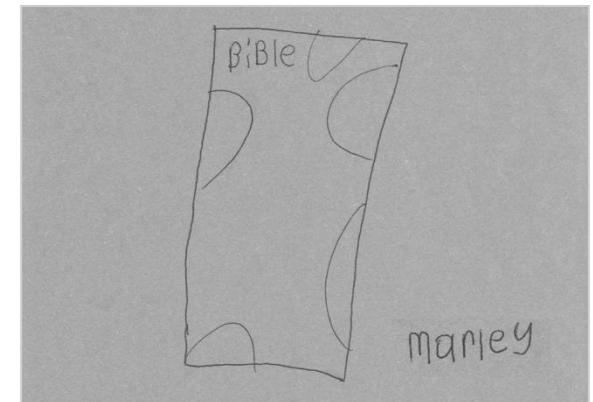
I kicked off this year in a Lay Servant class immersed in the book Soul Reset: Breakdown, Breakthrough, and the Journey to Wholeness by Junius B. Dotson. This text challenges each of us to ask and answer: How is it with your soul? What is your spiritual plan? How can you wake with, walk with, serve with, love with, and rest with Jesus in order to live in the light? How can you listen for God? Do you know there is no one else in your life who needs God more than *you* do?

I was completely dumbfounded: a spiritual plan?! Not a to-do list. Not a reminder of all the things one does within the church. Not a goal to make it to every Sunday service nor offer a donation. This is a soul wellness check; an option to reset – "pouring out of oneself to God. It means laying yourself at the altar and earnestly seeking God's face. It means a season of fervent praying and fasting. It includes finding new and meaningful ways to connect with Jesus, the lover of our souls." Knock. Me. Over.

My soul reset has just begun. I simply call out as Samuel did "Speak, for your servant is listening." (1 Samuel 3:10). Only when I call out and when I listen, can I praise and live in the light. My hope is you all will join me this Lenten season in evaluating the wellness of your souls.

In His Name,  
Lise J. Turner

Illustration by  
Marley



**March 19, 2022**

**Jesus Predicts His Death the Second Time**  
**Matthew 17:22-23** When the disciples came together in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised to life." And the disciples were filled with grief.

Plans and Predictions

Jaden jumped out of bed, ready for his soccer game. He pulled up the shade on his bedroom window. Raindrops splashed against the glass. No game today, he thought sadly. Sometimes people plan on things that don't happen.

One day Jesus told his disciples something that he would do. "Some people will hurt and kill me," he said. "But after three days, I will come alive again." The disciples were sad. They didn't want their friend to die.

Today, we find ourselves in the season of Lent. We remember that Jesus died on the cross to take our sins away. It makes us sad to think that Jesus had to die, but we are happy to know that His prediction came true. He did come alive again!

In the days ahead, take note of the weather predictions. How many times were they correct? Then consider whose predictions are always true— God or Man?

**Jesus, I am sorry you had to plan to die on the cross but thank you for keeping your promise and taking away my sin. Amen.**

Countdown to Easter – Daily Lenten Devotions for Children  
by Ruth Geisler  
Offered by: Benjamin and Abigail Edmondson



Illustration  
by  
Abigail Edmondson



Illustration  
by  
Benjamin Edmondson

**March 21, 2022**

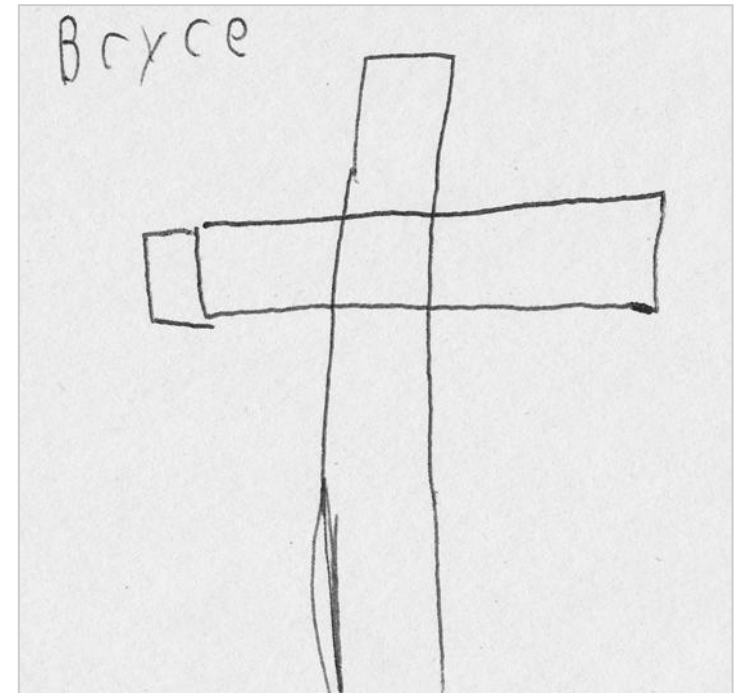
Read Proverbs 3:5-6 and Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)

Many years ago, I remember a cartoon of (I think) a dog and his line was "which way do I go George?" Which way do I go? (Someone correct me if I am wrong)

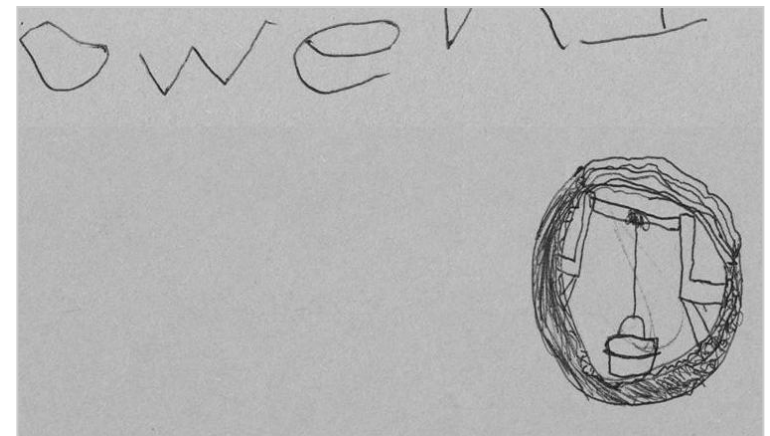
I was inspired by a devotion I the Upper Room that proved to me if we be still and "let God", even though in my mind, I needed to hurry up and make a decision, felt pushed to go one way or another-just choose something. I was questioning my plans and following dead ends. God does have his own plans for us. My husband and I had plans for an exciting retirement life together. Those dreams abruptly burst when Fred unexpectedly developed bladder cancer in March 2020 and sadly did pass away in September 2020. The only thing I was certain of was selling our property and downsizing as we had already planned was exactly what I was going to do and move on to my forever dwelling done and done right? WRONG. Several times I pursued a path only to have those plans derailed leaving me frustrated and anxious. I mistakenly thought if I got that far, I would be okay, and everything would fall into place. Pastor Karen and my family cautioned me to calm down and take it slower, just breathe-just breathe. Looking back, had I been successful in acquiring one of those desires, I would now be miserable and stuck! I am sure the Lord was shaking his head saying "why do you doubt me? I know what is best for you." Sure enough, I now see at least that part of my life has been solved and I feel assured that in that perspective, the Lord answered my needs.

Be patient even though you want to fix it and be done, God will guide you if you let him.

Blessings,  
Joy Honeycutt



Illustrations by Bryce Robertson & Owen Isenhour



March 22, 2022

**Isaiah 40:31**

"Yet those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary."

I believe that preparing during Lent is our duty while waiting for Jesus to come again. These special 40 days before Easter are a time that we can get ourselves ready. How do we get ready? We get ready by making special efforts to pray, being sure to remember those who have asked for our prayers, by setting aside time to read scriptures, by sending cards or letters to those who have been shut in and are lonely for someone's attention or sending a special donation for a charity that needs our help. Any act of kindness you do for someone here on earth is an act of kindness done for Jesus.

When Easter comes and you have prepared for Jesus coming by doing some of the things listed, see if you feel you have gained new strength and do not get tired and weary? God can do that if we cooperate and do what he wants us to do.

Brenda Stowe

Illustration by  
Charles Bridges



March 23, 2022

**Never Stop Praying**

**1 Thessalonians 5:16-18** "Always be joyful. Always keep on praying. No matter what happens, always be thankful. For this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus."

God wants us to be real in our prayers. Instead of worrying or obsessing about things, turn towards God. Paul is not asking us to pray continuously but asking us not to give up because our prayers are vital. God gave us the keys to use as his partners in this world, but we lost our keys in the fall. Jesus won them back and gave them again to us to use as followers. He wants us to intercede and make known his plans to this world. God has chosen not to work around us but through us. Our Prayers are critical to his intervention against evil in this world. We should never give up praying. As we stay in close communication with God, his Joy and Presence are ours. We are the agents on the front lines, our prayers are the means to advance.

**Prayer:** Dear God, fill my heart and mouth with prayers to you. Overcome evils of this world with my prayers. Amen

Janet Tracey

March 24, 2022

*"O soul, are you weary and troubled? No light in the darkness you see."*

This begins one of my favorite hymns, the one I learned as a child, painstakingly slow, on my grandmother's piano because the simple melody and comforting harmonies pulled and called to my young heart. That same piano now resides in my home, worn and loved and still mostly holding pitch, and on occasion I am still drawn to sit and plunk out what best I can remember of that familiar tune.

Life has changed so much in the time since I first fell in love with this hymn, as it should, as is God's design. I'm a mother, a wife, an educator, a friend, with all the weight, commitments, joys, and blessings that come with adulthood and those roles. Young Jennifer couldn't fathom those opening lyrics, but Mrs. Isenhour most definitely can. We have all endured heartache and loss, struggles and frustrations, especially over these last couple of years.

These dark days of winter, when the holiday lights have faded but the bright colors of spring have yet to burst forth can feel dim and heavy. And yet, it is at these times when it's even more important for us to turn our eyes upon Jesus. During the darkness, when our soul is weary and troubled, we can direct our gaze to the sacrifice of Christ, to His unending gift of love and mercy. Christ suffered and was Himself weary. He struggled and carried the weight of the world's sin upon His shoulders. He knows our struggles and He walks with us through them. In the ultimate darkness of death, from the pitch blackness of a closed tomb, the light of our Savior still breaks free and shines upon us.

*"And the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace."*

#### **Prayer**

*Loving Savior, we turn our eyes to You. We gaze upon your nail-scarred hands and feet, the wound in your side, and we stand in awe of your sacrifice. The light of Your love and grace envelopes us and shines a path for us during dark times. Thank you, Lord, for sending your only Son to die for our sins so that we might be saved. We give You all praise, and honor and glory. Amen.*

Jennifer Isenhour

March 25, 2022

The following devotion comes from the Men's Devotional Bible (New International Version) and was written by former Major League Baseball Pitcher, Orel Hershisier. I pray it will encourage you to share your faith with others:

**2 Timothy 1:8 (NIV): "So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God."**

Show and Tell

I'M NOT one to wear my faith on my sleeve. Christians can do a disservice to unbelievers by being obnoxious and judgmental. I'm a chapel leader and have been since my second year in the minors. People know where I'm coming from without my having to harp on it all the time. I know that the message of Christ offends because it calls sin, "sin", and says we are all sinners. There's no way to soften that truth. It's jarring and can alienate people until they begin to realize that it's true. My pushing it down everyone's throat will not make it any easier for them to investigate what it's all about.

I just tell people about God naturally, when opportunities arise or when I'm asked. It's amazing how many people notice when you tend to be straight. If you're not a carouser, not a womanizer, not foul-mouthed, not a gossip, it gets around!

We're far from perfect. We fail. There are people who may think we are insincere or who think we're judgmental. I can't defend myself against people who say I am phony. Only my family, my true friends and I know who I really am inside. I'll have to answer for that someday. I can only do and be what I think God wants me to do and be. I never want to embarrass Him or bring Him shame.

Submitted by: Jason E. Creel

## March 26, 2022

Matthew 19:14

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

This year we asked our Sunday School class and any other children/youth who visited our class over the last three weeks, the below questions after reading the verse to them. Their answers are listed. Our children and youth are amazing people and it's always interesting to hear their thoughts and opinions. WE are so Blessed to have them as part of our Church. As the adults in the Church, it is our responsibility to continue to foster their belief and curiosity.

**Week 1** - 1 John 5:3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his Commandments. And his Commandments are not burdensome

**What do you think this verse means?**

**What is the first commandment that comes to mind?**

**Will E (3<sup>rd</sup> Grade)** – Keep going, don't give up.....God loves us

**Katelyn F (5<sup>th</sup> Grade)** – It is not hard to love God.....Obey Parents

**Tyler E (9<sup>th</sup> Grade)** – We should follow the ten commandments to the best of our ability because they are easy to follow..... You shall love thy neighbor as thyself

**Week 2**

Joshua 1:9 Remember that I commanded you to be strong and brave. So don't be afraid. The Lord your God will be with you everywhere you go.

**What do you think this verse means?**

**Katelyn F (5<sup>th</sup> Grade)** – It means that you are strong and brave even if you don't remember it.

**Tyler E (9<sup>th</sup> Grade)** – The Lord is with you even when you're afraid and everywhere you go.

**Piper B (4<sup>th</sup> Grade)** – Be confident with everything or something or to have confidence with you.

**Peyson C (2<sup>nd</sup> Grade)** – I can do it no matter what.

**Marley T (4<sup>th</sup> Grade)** – To be more brave and not afraid.

**William I (2<sup>nd</sup> Grade)** – Help

**Bryce R (5<sup>th</sup> Grade)** – To help

**Owen I (5<sup>th</sup> Grade)** – You are strong and brave, so you don't need to be afraid. The Lord is there to help you.

## March 26, 2022 (Continued)

**Week 3**

Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

**What is this verse telling you?**

**What fruit of the Spirit is most important for you?**

**Piper B (4<sup>th</sup> Grade)** – I think that it means that God is everything and the most important thing is self-control for me.

**William I (2<sup>nd</sup> Grade)** – To be helpful. Joy

**Owen I (5<sup>th</sup> Grade)** – It means that when you follow this that you will go to God and live happily. Patience

**Peyson C (2<sup>nd</sup> Grade)** – Joy

**Katelyn F (5<sup>th</sup> Grade)** – Follow the fruits of the Spirit. Patience, I like baking, so I have to wait for it to bake.

----- Future of St. John's UMC

Teachers: Katherine Burns and Amber Boan



March 28, 2022

**We Can Do No Great Things – Only Small Things  
With Great Love**

Never let anyone come to you without coming away better and happier.

Everybody should see kindness in your face, in your eyes, in your smile, and in your warm greeting.

Pure love is a willingness to give without a thought of receiving anything in return.

The love we give away is the only love we keep.

Always remember the love we have for others only starts from us and always comes back to warm our hearts and the hearts of many others.

Love does not measure; it just gives more.

Debby Valloric

March 29, 2022

**Wheat, Weeds, and a Mustard Seed Scripture Reading —**

**Matthew 13:24-32** The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where did the weeds come from?' —

**Matthew 13:27** We know that the world we live in has many good things and amazing blessings, but there is also hardship and brokenness.

Ever since our first parents fell into sin (Genesis 3), there has been toil and trouble amid all the good things God provides us in life. We can find and cultivate all kinds of good food, but we have to work hard for it. We can enjoy good health, but we can also get sick—and even die. Nature can be breathtakingly beautiful, but it can also be viciously cruel. In his parable about the wheat and the weeds, Jesus points out the corruption and brokenness of life in this world. And because there is still much good amid the damaging effects of sin and evil, he is willing to wait for the time of harvest. At that time the judgment will come, and the weeds, representing wicked people and all their evil works and systems, will be cast out (see Matthew 13:36-43).

In the meantime, though, the kingdom of God will grow in surprising ways, like the huge plant that grows from a tiny mustard seed. At first it may not even be noticeable. But as it takes root and grows, the good seed of the kingdom spreads far and high and deep and wide, providing comfort and support and rest and peace, even amid the troubles of everyday life. Have you found the peace and rest of the kingdom of God, and will you help others find it too?

**Prayer** Lord, grant us your peace and grace in this troubled world, and help us to share it for your sake. Amen.

Shared by John Howard

Written by: George Young

-<https://todaydevotional.com/authors/georgeyoung>



March 30, 2022

**Rash language cuts and maims, but there is healing in the words of the wise. Proverbs 12:18**

Change. It's bound to happen- good, bad, and ugly. David Bowie even has a song about it ("Ch-ch-ch-ch-changes. Turn and face the strange." It's stuck in your head now, and you're welcome for that). But what makes change so tricky? For starters, there's a tendency to feel all of these opposing emotions at once. Happy and sad. Excited and scared. Joy and sorrow. Someone may be excited about their dream job yet scared to take on more responsibility. Another may be happy about a first date, but sad about a previous break up. It's normal to feel all of this, but it can be disorienting and confusing.

How can we actually turn and face the strange ahead of us when there's so much emotional conflict within us? I believe that we can use our words. Our words, through the power of the Holy Spirit, can give death and destruction or life and healing to others. Author Annie F. Downs writes about this in her book, *Speak Love*. She makes a point to say that if we're made in God's image and God *spoke* our entire world into being, then we have also been given that same power from God. Moreover, I think that if we are asking God to surround us with the power of the Holy Spirit, then we are asking to share that life-giving power with others around us. And since God has given us a gift, we have to be good stewards of that.

The way we speak to God, to our neighbors, and to ourselves can change the trajectory of someone's entire life. Good news and bad news can come in an instant. But how we use our words to respond to change can affect the posture of our spirits, our relationships with others, and the growth of our faith.

Submitted by Anna Gilreath

March 31, 2022

My word for the year is "grow." When I view growth through the lens of Lent and fasting or self-denial, I envision a gardener pruning a plant. The plant's growth is controlled as the gardener desires, not as the plant would grow left on its own. This pruning is done for aesthetic reasons, but also helps keep the plant healthy and vibrant.

In John's gospel, Mary Magdalene sees Jesus initially after the resurrection as a gardener.

**John 20:14-15** (ESV). **14** Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. **15** Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away."

As we traverse this lenten season, may we open ourselves up to Jesus as the gardener, and be receptive enough to have the Master prune and shape us into the vibrant followers of Christ we're meant to become.

Justin Isenhour

## April 1, 2022

**Proverbs 11:25** "A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed."

When Lent rolls around each year most of us begin to think about what we can give up as a sacrifice to test our self-discipline. Some people believe this is to represent Jesus' sacrifice when he went into the desert to pray and fast for 40 days before later dying on the cross. This year instead of giving something up why not do something to make someone's day. The creative genius of generosity is alive and well within all of us. Seek its counsel and then act accordingly.

### **GENEROSITY IS GOOD FOR YOU**

There are so many ways generosity is good for you. Over the past 25 years, there have been hundreds of studies into the effects of giving and generosity, and yet, in many ways they seem to simply affirm what we already knew intuitively or from experience. Here are sixteen ways generosity is good for you:

- \*Generosity improves your physical health.
- \*It improves your mood.
- \*Generous people live longer.
- \*It evokes gratitude and contentment.
- \*It enhances our awareness of the meaning and purpose of life.
- \*Generous people have better relationships.
- \*It makes us happy.
- \*It transforms the way we feel about ourselves.
- \*Generous people tend to have more friends.
- \*It stimulates a more positive outlook on life.
- \*It has a mysterious way of rewarding you tenfold.
- \*Generosity leads to higher self-esteem, greater life satisfaction, better mental health, lower blood pressure, decreased stress, and the list literally goes on and on.

Source: Matthew Kelly "The Generosity Habit", Copyright 2021

**St. Ignatius Prayer:** Lord Jesus, teach me to be generous. Teach me to serve as you deserve, to give and not count the cost, to fight and not to heed the wounds, to labor and not to seek to rest, to give of myself and not ask for a reward, except the reward of knowing that I am doing your will.

Submitted by Judy Tilly

## April 2, 2022

Over the season of Covid, I think we have all found ourselves discovering new hobbies or things to enjoy when we were stuck in our houses. I had always thought I had a black thumb, that I was not good at making things grow or even sustaining them, even though my father was a landscaper and my mother was a florist. Before Covid started, I had one single solitary plant. It was an easy pothos given to me by my grandmother. I had cared for it for 3 years. Now, 2 years later, I am the plant parent to 25 plants. It has become a problem. But I love how beautiful their leaves are, how much life they give to a room.

Sometimes in my busy life (or slack, depending on who you ask), I become neglectful of my plants and I can see the damage on their leaves. There are brown, crispy spots and droopy leaves scream at me to water them. It's very apparent when they are in need of some TLC.

In the Book of John, we hear Jesus give many examples of who He is. "I am the Bread of Life, I am the Resurrection, I am the Living Water, etc. The example of Jesus being the True Vine found in John 15 has never made as much sense to me as it does now. He says "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch that doesn't produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more...Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. "John 15:1-2, 5 (NLT)

When my plants are not doing what I want, sometimes I have to cut off their leaves. Sometimes when they are growing, other leaves turn yellow because the energy is going to making new leaves. Plants have to be tended to just like we do. We have to examine ourselves, make changes where needed, and be willing to give up things to grow. And I thank God every day, that he is better at caring for his children, watering them, tending them, and pruning them, than I am.

Submitted by Mallory Capps

April 4, 2022

**Luke 15: 11-32 "The Lost Son"**

**God of Gratitude**

By: Kevin Johnson From: Discipleship Ministries

I am amazed that every time I read the parable of the Prodigal Son, I hear a different voice resonating in the story. But in each of the voices, I find the emotion of gratitude. I wonder how the son could give thanks to God when he found himself hungry and without family or friends. I wonder how the father had gratitude each day, looking down the road for his son's return, hoping today would be the day. I wonder how the older son expressed gratitude and gave thanks to God in the midst of all he saw unfold.

Hearing and seeing how the different characters respond in this parable allows us to open our hearts and minds to the message God brings. It is a message of peace in times of pain. It is a message of hope in times of despair. It is a message of gratitude in selflessness in a time of selfishness. One of the key themes in this parable is the father's gratitude for the youngest son's return home. The father's attitude of gratitude is seen each time we read the parable.

Just as the father demonstrates gratitude in this parable, we too are called to give thanks for all that God has done for us. During this time that people around the world hear words such as pandemic and quarantine, we need to be grateful for the good that God offers. We need to pay attention and focus on what is good in our lives (even if it seems only for a moment). We need to see, feel, and point out God's presence in our lives. We need to share those moments with others. God's promise to always be with us and the power of God's hope got people in the scripture through the dark places, and that same hope will guide us today.

**Loving and gracious God, we know the world today is anxious and scared. We give you thanks for your peace during these difficult times. Be with our families as we spend time preparing our hearts and minds during this season of Lent. Give us creative ways to remember and show our love to you and others in our community and in the world. In your Holy name we pray, Amen.**

Submitted by R.W. Edmondson

April 5, 2022

**THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY**

"For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." **Matthew 18:20**

It seems we are meant to live in community with others. It is said about friendship that it "divides our sorrows and multiplies our joy." We take comfort and find support in the company of others, many of whom are sharing our same life experiences.

That was one of the things that was so difficult about the pandemic we are still navigating our way through. We sometimes felt lonely and isolated from those whose words of encouragement and insight help us through uncertain times. In recent memory perhaps we had not faced a situation where we encountered others only through a face mask, on the computer or through limited in-person contact. Certainly, our online connections with our church helped bridge the gap but how wonderful it is to see the slow but steady return to "normalcy" in the life of our church.

These powerful words from Matthew remind us that the church is for us a community and that we feel the strength of that when we worship together. We pray for God's continued blessings on our congregation as we seek together to do His will.

Nancy Stark

April 6, 2022

### Listening to the Radio

As I was growing up in Greenwood, South Carolina, I often spent time listening to the radio. Most mornings, I would hear a devotion led by a retired Presbyterian minister referred to as Dr. "A." He was already retired and had become Pastor Emeritus of First Presbyterian. Some years after Dr. "A" finished airing his devotions on WCRS, several were published under the title, *Living Day By Day With Dr. "A."*

I will never forget the morning I met Dr. "A" in person. I had an early dentist appointment with Dr. Pettit, a family friend. Dr. "A" was also a patient of Dr. Pettit. I felt so honored to meet this man of faith who shared his stories over the air in real and relatable ways. Before long, it felt like Dr. "A" was an old friend. I never forgot one of the lessons Dr. "A" shared with this young pastor that day:

**People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care!**

I often think about Dr. "A" when I listen to a podcast, especially when the speaker encourages humanity to look for the best in each other. So often today, people don't consider what others are going through or how they are feeling. Honestly, some people try to take advantage of others when they know someone is going through a rough time.

The season of Lent is a time to remind all of us that sometimes it is the darkest just before dawn. Since we are broken in some capacity, we all need to look to Jesus, who is and always will be our hope.

***Looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God. Hebrews 12:2***

As we continue this journey in Lent, may we encourage others to remember how Jesus gave his life to show us how much he loved and cared for all humanity.

Thank you, Dr. "A"; all these years later, I still know how much you cared. My prayer this year is we will remember that Jesus cared so much for us that he gave all he had and in return, hopefully, we will care for others.

Shalom, Karen

April 7, 2022

### A Box of Crayons

While coloring with my grandchildren, the song "Jesus Loves the Little Children" came to mind. Looking at the kids' skin next to the white paper, they really aren't white. Then I thought of my African American "black" friends and decided the darkest one is really a beautiful rich chocolate color, not black. My Cambodian friend definitely isn't yellow, and my Navajo friend isn't red. It occurred to me that we are all really just different shades of brown, some light, and others dark.

Then yesterday I noticed Crayola has boxes of crayons called "Colors of the World". There are 24 shades of... you guessed it...brown -so kids can more accurately color themselves, their family, and their friends from all over the world.

Jesus DOES love all His children, light, dark or in between. Let's do the same.

### Prayer;

Dear God,  
Thank you for loving all your children no matter how we look or act. Help us to love one another despite our differences. Amen

Phyllis Helms

April 8, 2022

Be still, and know that I am God  
**Psalm 46:10**

During Lent 2021, a group gathered on Thursday evenings to read and discuss "We Are Beloved" by Kristen E Vincent. The book's message was just what the title says – we ARE beloved children of God. For me, that was the easy part. In a Disciple class many years ago, God had spoken to me and reassured me that God's love and care would not fail, even when I did.

Knowing that has pushed me to address problems by becoming involved in church and community ministries over the years, some successful by human standards, and others not so. Even in personal relationships that may have hit a rough spot, I confess that I tried to 'fix' things on my own. I felt the pressure of time, to hurry up and set things right.

When we came to this scripture in the text, I felt sure that God meant this message for me. It's been on my mind and in my heart through the past year and keeps reminding me that it's best to wait for God to show the way.

*Be still, and know that I am God.  
Be still, and know that I am.  
Be still, and know.  
Be still.  
Be.*

May God give you the peace and confidence to be still as God works in our world.

Barbara Gaither

April 9, 2022

**ROMANS 12:21**

Do not be overcome by evil, **but overcome evil with good.**

In the last couple of years, our world seems to have been overcome by evil, it seems almost impossible to know the truth, and Christians are trying to figure out how best to speak out about the truth of our Lord Jesus Christ and his grace (or gift of eternal life).

The book of Romans, especially chapter 12, gives us very detailed guidance about our role as a Christian, especially in troubled times. Some excerpts from other verses in chapter 12 – "Let love be without hypocrisy." "Abhor what is evil". "Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, fervent in spirit, rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, and continuing steadfastly in prayer." "Bless those who persecute you". "Associate with the humble". "Repay no one evil for evil".

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him;  
If he is thirsty, give him a drink;  
For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head".

Remember the greatest commandment is "LOVE the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength", and the corollary to that is 'LOVE thy neighbor as thyself'. As Christians, we have 2 jobs – (1) to spread the truth of the gospel by showing our Love to others, both other believers and also sinners: and (2) to forgive those who have hurt us.

Remember, they will know we are Christians by our love. We don't even have to worry about what to say. God will open the eyes and ears of the sinner and prepare them to hear the message of the gospel by the example of our showing love, even to those in sin. God reserves to himself the judgement of all (believers and non-believers) so it is not our place to judge or engage in arguments about sin. God reserves to himself the meting out of consequences and punishment. Therefore, we should not seek revenge against those who have hurt us. Our role is to cause others to be attracted to the love we show and for them to want to know how we get the will and the strength to do that and what is the source of our obvious Joy in life. If we often study the word, God will give us the words to say when others question us about showing love.

So never worry about what to say – Love is an action verb. Let your actions speak for you. The Holy Spirit will be with you to give you courage and strength. God will bless your commitment to him and your faith in his promises.

Martha Jones

April 11, 2022

**1 Peter 1:18-19** "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect."

**Isaiah 61:10** - I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

God Chooses You

Do you ever feel invisible? As if nobody even notices you. Maybe some new clothes will get me noticed, you think. And maybe they do, for a little while. But then the latest craze is yesterday's news and you're back to.....invisible. Do you want a change that lasts? Learn to see yourself as God sees you—covered with the "clothes of salvation" and wrapped in "a coat of goodness."

Do you ever feel like a nobody? When you do, remember what you are really worth. Remember what—or rather who—God gave to save you: "You were bought with the precious blood of the death of Christ, who was like a pure and perfect lamb."

If you ever start to feel invisible or left out, remember this: God chooses you to be his child. That can be hard to remember sometimes. So, pray about it. Think about it. Let the way God sees you change the way you see yourself.

As you journey through the season of Lent, remember, God chooses to see you as his wonderful creation.

As you continue to grow in God's grace, how do you choose to see your family and friends? They are each a wonderful creation of God. Your mom. Your dad. Even your sister and brother. Find something you love about each of your family members and friends—then tell them what it is.

"Grace for the Moment" by Max Lucado

Offered by Molly Boney

April 12, 2022

As I write this Lenten devotion, I think back to Advent, two months ago. I recall the preparations: setting up the crèche, Christmas tree, greenery and lights, candles in the windows, etc. Our church was beautifully decorated, particularly the sanctuary, as we anxiously awaited Christmas and the celebration of Jesus' birth.

But now it is time for Lent. A more solemn time, one of self-examination and possibly giving something up (for Lent). There are no festive decorations. No decorations at all in my home. Yet, it is a time of anticipation and journey. A passage from Luke 9:51 comes to mind:

*When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.*

Jesus knew he was heading to the cross, death, and resurrection. Despite knowing the torment his human body would experience, he set his face toward Jerusalem. As we contemplate the sacrifice our Lord has given for us, let us set our faces to the cross.

"Take up thy cross," the Savior said,  
"If thou wouldst my disciple be;  
deny thyself, the world forsake,  
and humbly follow after me."

Take up thy cross, nor heed the shame,  
nor let thy foolish pride rebel;  
thy Lord for thee the cross endured,  
to save thy soul from death and hell.

Take up thy cross and follow Christ,  
nor think till death to lay it down;  
for only those who bear the cross  
may hope to wear the glorious crown.

*Charles W. Everest*

Submitted by Nancy Rivers

April 13, 2022

**Luke 4:1-13(CEB) Jesus returned from the Jordan River full of the Holy Spirit and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. There he was tempted for forty days by the devil. He ate nothing during those days and afterward Jesus was starving. The devil said to him, "Since you are God's son, command this stone to become a loaf of bread." Jesus replied, "It's written, People won't live only by bread." Next the devil led him to a high place and showed him in a single instant all the kingdoms of the world. The devil said, "I will give you this whole domain and the glory of all these kingdoms. It's been entrusted to me, and I can give it to anyone I want. Therefore, if you will worship me, it will all be yours." Jesus answered, "It's written, you will worship the Lord your God and serve only him." The devil brought him into Jerusalem and stood him at the highest point of the temple. He said to him, "Since you are God's son, throw yourself down from here; for its written: He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you and they will take up in their hands so that you won't hit your foot on a stone." Jesus answered, "It's been said, don't test the Lord your God." After finishing every temptation, the devil departed from him until the next opportunity.**

In the above Scripture, we hear Jesus being tempted by the devil. We know Jesus was not alone; Scripture reminds us that he was "full of the Holy Spirit" and that he was "led by the Spirit in the wilderness." And yet, the devil tries to persuade Jesus to worship him.

During this Lenten season, consider what temptations keep your attention and love from God. Is there something that has power and influence over you, or is there something that prevents you and your family from spending time with God? It could be TV, video games, Facebook, I-phones, or any number of other distractions, the choices are unlimited.

**God, in this time of Lent, I will give up \_\_\_\_\_. Help me focus on you and your presence in my life. Thank you for being with me during this time. Thank you for your presence and love. I give this time to you. Amen.**

Family Lent Devotion: Discipleship Ministries – The United Methodist Church

Offered by: Patrick Edmondson

April 14, 2022

***Having sufficient power, force, or efficacy, for the object; valid.***

Too often we allow ourselves to become overly concerned about our weaknesses. The truth is you don't have to be worried about your weaknesses. God is not at all surprised by them because He knows everything there is to know about you.

God is not looking for ***ability***; He's looking for ***availability***.

I encourage you to wake up every day and say: "Here I am, God. Is there anything You want me to do? Do You have something new for me today? I'm going to be bold and courageous in You, Lord. I'm available for whatever You have planned for my life."

If you'll have this attitude, you'll be amazed at the ways God will use you to change the world around you.

**Also, I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for Us? Then said I, here am I; send me. – Isaiah 6:8.**

**Grace**

***Favor; mercy; pardon.***

We cannot earn God's approval. So then how can we get it? Receiving God's grace that is provided in Jesus is the answer to this problem. We must know there is nothing we can do, but God's amazing grace invites us into a loving relationship with Him.

Grace is a gift that can't be purchased with our performance or anything else --- it can only be received by faith.

Grace is God's undeserved favor! It is His love, mercy, and forgiveness that is available at no cost to us. Grace is also the power to change us and make us into what He wants us to be. There is no limit to God's grace, and it is available to restore and lift us up anytime we fail.

You can be free today from the anger and anxiety caused by perfectionism by giving up your own works and trusting in the work that Jesus has done for us all. Remember, God simply requires you to believe in the One Whom He has sent (John6:28-29).

**For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. – John 1:7 (NIV).**

Submitted by George Dickinson

**April 15, 2022**

**When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him and the criminals there, one on his right, the other on his left. Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." Luke 23:33-34**

As Mary stood before the cross of her Son, she heard Him speak these words with compassion, conviction, and mercy, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." These are the first of seven statements from our Lord spoken to His Father while on the Cross. In many ways, they are foundational teachings for the entire Christian life. These words about forgiveness are integral to the core foundation of our Christian faith.

As Jesus cried out to the Father, begging for mercy upon those responsible for His brutal Crucifixion, so our Blessed Mother would have cried out as in one song of mercy and praise. Their hearts of mercy were united. One unwavering song of forgiveness was sung by two voices, He who suffered physically, and she who suffered silently.

To forgive without reserve in such a moment is almost beyond human comprehension. It's beyond what our fallen human nature can immediately grasp. So often we want revenge and worldly justice. We want others to be held accountable and judged for their wrongs. But this is not our role because God our Father in Heaven is the only judge. We only have one duty and that is to forgive. And we must do so over and over again.

Who has hurt you? Against whom do you hold a grudge? Whom have you failed to forgive? Forgiving another does not excuse their sin. On the contrary, an act of forgiveness acknowledges sin as a prior act in need of mercy. Forgiveness offers mercy even when it is not asked for or even deserved. Mercy must be given by us without reserve and in every situation in life on account of the unlimited mercy given to us by God. Mercy flows downhill, and offer it to those whom you need to forgive.

Submitted by Tevis Vandergriff

**April 16, 2022**

**Psalms 55:22** Cast your cares on the Lord, and he will sustain you: he will never let the righteous be shaken.

**2 Corinthians 4:16-18** Jesus said, "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

In my younger years, no matter how bleak my problems seemed, they seldom took away my focus or caused me sleepless nights. I find now, as I have progressed into my "golden years" I am much more prone to worry needlessly. I lay my cares at the feet of Jesus, but seem to have difficulty when it's time to leave them there. There are many Bible references that warn us against the senselessness of fretting about things we have so little control over. Worry distracts us, changes our focus, and steals our joy and peace. Giving our problems to our loving God will restore us, which leaves us free to be his hands and feet here in this world. This was my mother's favorite prayer and I have it posted in several rooms of our home.

**Prayer:** God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

Ellie Davies



## **St. Johns United Methodist Church**



**130 Tom Hall Street  
Fort Mill, SC 29715**

**803-547-7538**

**[stjohnsfm.org](http://stjohnsfm.org)**