



# LENT

A JOURNEY TO THE CROSS

2017

### **A Word About The Project:**

For the past season, a cluster of churches have been meeting together to see how we may do Kingdom work together. We worship at times together, talk about how we might partner in missions and ministry and share the Good News in ways that are meaningful and relevant to our congregations and shared community.

Each congregation has particular strengths and growing edges. We place what we have to offer on the table in order to share resources and insight with each other. This has allowed us to see more clearly the big God family all around us, and multiply the ministry in ways we couldn't do alone. We can't say that this is a project of one denomination, or town or region. We have participants from across denominational lines and throughout the country.

Our "Common Table Churches" have come together to do the Kingdom work that is so vital and needed today.

### **A Word of Thanks:**

Thank YOU, the readers, writers, editors and faith communities who have made this project a life-giving challenge. Without this wonderful community this devotional would not have happened, but more importantly we would miss out on the connection that this devotional represents. Thank you for your willingness to experiment with us as we partner with the Holy Spirit and the body of Christ.

We are excited to Journey though lent with you.

## **How To Use This Resource:**

Each day has scripture readings from the Book of Common Prayer. These readings are traditionally used to help frame your day. You may read as many of the selections for the day as you would like, but are encouraged to at least read the passages that are being reflected on for the day by our contributors.

Before beginning, pause to quiet yourself and create a place where God might dwell in your time of devotion and reflection. Offer up a small prayer that God might guide your time. To end your devotion time, pray for the things that are weighing on your heart as well as the hope that you may be mindful of the day's devotion.

Finally, be sure to write any questions or thoughts you would like to share with someone later. Our faith development is a community endeavor. Hopefully, this devotional will provide a jumping off point for growth and community.

## **Common Table Worship Experiences in Lent**

**Ash Wednesday Worship**

**7:30 pm at Araby UMC**

**Thursday Evening Worship (March 8-April 5)**

**7:00 pm at Wesley Chapel**

**Maundy Thursday Worship at Wesley Chapel**

**Music beginning at 7:00 pm**

**Worship begins at 7:30**

**Good Friday Worship**

**7:30 pm at Flint Hill UMC**



# March 1

## Scriptures for the Day

<b>Psalm</b>	<b>OT</b>	<b>Epistle</b>	<b>Gospel</b>
am: 95, 32, 143 pm: 102, 130	Jon 3:1-4:11	Heb 12:1-14	Luke 18:9-14

### Reflecting on Psalm 143

Many years ago while on a cross-country bicycle trip, I decided to get an early start alone. I relished the cool breeze as I rode through the desert. Before long, the temperature was rising rapidly. I drank all my water in a very short time. The town I saw in the distance was far away. The only shade I found was in a gully under a railroad track. As time went by, I got even hotter and very thirsty.

I called out to God but nothing happened. No cars passed. I was alone! The temperature was rising rapidly. I realized I could die under that railway if no one came along with water. I had almost given up hope, when one of my fellow riders came by with a gallon water jug on his bicycle! I weakly called, but he had already seen me and stopped. His water refreshed my body and his presence were gifts from God that day.

As we journey through life, our hearts, souls and minds can dry out and shrivel up. We may look fine, but our souls are suffering. When we call out to God, he gives us cool fresh spiritual water to restore our souls.

Author: Rev. Vicki Dotterer, Wesley Chapel UMC



**March 2**

**Scriptures For the Day:**

<b>Psalm</b>	<b>OT</b>	<b>Epistle</b>	<b>Gospel</b>
am: 37:1-18 pm: 37:19-42	Deut 7:6-11	Titus 1:1-16	John 1:29-34

**Reflecting on Deuteronomy 7:6-11**

The Lord chose you. The Lord chose me too, but the Lord chose YOU!

Let that sink in for a minute. The creator of the universe chose you, and knows your name and your favorite kind of candy and your type of music.

That's amazing.

But, as our scripture reminds us, it isn't because we are something special. It is because God is something special.

Throughout scripture, God's refrain is for us to remember our story and whose we are. This is because when we remember whose we are and where we came from, we can go back to that place, that wellspring and draw life even in the dry times.

In this season of Lent, we make the journey to the cross. At times, we are encouraged to give something up or take on something that will bring our focus back to God, the one who chose us. It is this God-given worth that pushes God's people to continue while in the promise land and in times of exile and wilderness.

How do you remind yourself that you have value and worth?

How might you affirm the God given value and worth in your neighbor today?

Author: Pastor Chris Bishop, FaithPoint



March 3

**Scriptures For the Day:**

<b>Psalm</b>	<b>OT</b>	<b>Epistle</b>	<b>Gospel</b>
am: 95, 31 pm: 35	Deut 7:12-16	Titus 2:1-15	John 1:35-42

**Reflecting on Titus 2:1-15**

Paul's message to Titus is about the importance of teaching by example.

The youth of today, as well as new believers and old believers in Jesus Christ, follow the examples of those in their lives. They look to see how we behave according to how we say we should.

I was raised in the church by my mother and grandmother. At 19, I married and stopped going to church. I did not give my children a good example to follow. At 38, in the midst of a divorce, I looked out the patio door of my apartment and asked Jesus to come back into my life. I have tried since that time to be a better example to anyone God puts before me. I try to wear my cross every day for 3 reasons.

**Teaching all people how to be Godly**

1. To show that I am a child of the Most High God.
2. To show that I am a believer in my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.
3. To do my best not to embarrass Christ by my actions to others – to lead by example.

How can we all be better examples?

Author: Tom Darby, Lay Leader, Ijamsville UMC



March 4

**Scriptures For the Day:**

<b>Psalm</b>	<b>OT</b>	<b>Epistle</b>	<b>Gospel</b>
am: 30, 32 pm: 42, 43	Deut 7:17-26	Titus 3:1-15	John 1:43-51

**Reflecting on Titus 3:1-5**

The two words that stood out the most for me in the reading from Titus were Good and Grace.

These words are central to my life in so many ways. One of my most natural roles in my life has been that of a caregiver. I have a desire to help others that starts with me wanting to see situations from their perspective and often leads to me trying (or at least desiring) to make the lives of other people easier, happier, or better in some way. I promise that I am not always able to behave this way! None of us always act and behave in perfectly unselfish manners. But, as Christians, we have a confidence in the love of God for each of us and in our place for eternity that gives us an advantage to be able to overcome the self-centered nature that humans are so often known for. This confidence comes from our relationship with God and allows us to place other people's needs first. When we do this, we are not only helping take care of basic needs like food, clothing, and shelter, but we are also pointing them toward the kindness and love of God. Obviously, good deeds can help to take care of the physical needs of others, and it's easy to see that this can spill into helping to care for their spiritual needs, but it is also a very important way for each of us to continue and build our own relationship with God. Allowing God to use us as a tool to provide His grace to others is an incredible reminder of His love and grace throughout our own lives as well.

**Prayer:** Dear heavenly Father, thank you for your love and kindness. Thank you for giving me a place in your eternal kingdom. Please help me to do good for other people so that they are able to experience your love and kindness and discover their place in your kingdom as well. Please reveal to me where I can do more good. Please show me who's urgent need I can help to meet. Allow me to be agent of your kindness, love, and grace in this world.

(silence to allow God to speak to your heart) Amen

Author: Melissa Herman, FaithPoint



# March 5

## Scriptures For the Day:

Psalm	OT	Epistle	Gospel
am: 63, 98 pm: 103	Deut 8:1-10	1 Cor 1:17-31	Mark 2:18-22

### Reflection on Deuteronomy 8:1-10

#### Whose Road?

“Remember the long road on which the Lord your God led you during these forty years in the desert so he could humble you, testing you to find out what was in your heart: whether you would keep his commandments or not.” Deuteronomy 8:2 (CEB)

I resonate with those wandering in deserts and wildernesses. And I have always been curious about what part of their(my) wandering was designed to prepare them(me) for what was next and what part of their wandering was them(me) searching for God’s path or getting distracted by something else. I’ve come to understand that those distinctions might be all one in the same and that God is faithfully with us through it all.

As I reflect on the roads that have brought me to where I am today, they are marked by places that I was humbled and/or tested. Sometimes that humility came from God through others correcting me and other times that humility came from God showing up in my life in such awesome ways that I felt my unworthiness and God’s power. As for the “testing” (that whole concept messes with me, by the way), I am clear about times when choices I made revealed my love for God, my love for self, my love for neighbor and times when my emotions caused me to stray.

Remember and reflect on your journey with God to date. What is the next step which the Lord your God is leading you to take?





## March 6

### Scriptures For the Day:

Psalm	OT	Epistle	Gospel
am: 41, 52 pm: 44	Deut 8:11-18	Heb 2:11-18	John 2:1-12

### Reflecting on John 2:1-12

Have you ever been asked to do what seemed impossible to accomplish? Chances are, it wasn't as impossible as Jesus having to turn water into wine, but the task was daunting nonetheless.

Many times, we are given tasks that seem impossible to us at first glance. We think about the time and energy the challenge involves and about everything else that we could accomplish in place of that one particular task. But seldom do we consider the impact we have on others while performing these tasks.


It's easy for us to make excuses. In the moment of decision, not being involved almost logically places us out of responsibility with the outcome of the task. Even Jesus tried getting out of turning water into wine when his own mother asked him to.

However, by not answering the call to lend a hand or take the first steps in those "impossible tasks", we fail the same people we set out to help. Making excuses or putting off our involvement in issues or projects only delays the inevitable and adds to the struggle of accomplishing great things. And worse of all, it shows that we don't care about those we serve or those we serve alongside of. We turn an act of selflessness into self-centeredness.

Think what would have happened if Christ refused to turn water into wine. He wouldn't have just embarrassed his mother; He would've denied an opportunity for God to work through Him to benefit others – the sole reason He was sent to live among us in the first place.

What are some impossible challenges you've been tasked with? What is stopping you from taking the first steps in accomplishing the impossible? How is your decision to not act on your

Author: Courtney Ward, FaithPoint



**March 7**

**Scriptures For the Day:**

<b>Psalm</b>	<b>OT</b>	<b>Epistle</b>	<b>Gospel</b>
am: 45 pm: 47, 48	Deut 9:4-12	Heb 3:1-11	John 2:13-22

**Reflecting on John 2:13-22**

**Protect this House**

We see Jesus in the Temple and he becomes disgusted with the moneychangers and other merchants who have pervaded the inner sanctum of the Temple. He says, "This is my Father's house and it has been turned into an out-of-control marketplace." Jesus turns over the tables of the moneychangers and attempts to push the merchants out of the inner temple. This place is not intended to be used for commerce, but for the worship and pleasing of God.

Jesus, in essence is protecting his father's house in such a manner that the disciples remember the words "Zeal for your house will consume me." Still those in the Temple challenge the authority of Jesus to "kick them out of the temple." Jesus replies for them to tear down the temple and He will raise it up in three days. Again the people were astonished because it took 46 years to build the Temple. Jesus was however, referring to his death and resurrection. The disciples heard this, remembered what Jesus had said, and knew that the Scripture would be fulfilled.

So therefore, as we enter this season of Lent, let us affirm that in the Resurrection of Christ, he died so that God's House was always protected. Let us "protect this house" and prepare ourselves for the Good News of the risen Christ.

Author: Pastor Phil Beck, Living Grace Lutheran Church



# March 8

## Scriptures For the Day:

Psalm	OT	Epistle	Gospel
am: 119:49-72 pm: 49, 53	Deut 9:13-21	Heb 3:12-19	John 2:23-3:15

### ***Reflecting on Hebrews 3:12-19***

*Take care, brothers and sisters, not to turn away from God. Exhort one another every day so that we do not become hardened by sin. Do not harden your hearts again.*

I hear three things when I read this passage.

First, we should refuse to walk away from God. Turning away from God's will leads to our destruction, and we must be diligent about keeping that from happening. In practical terms, we must hold any spiritual discipline that will keep us on the path toward God.

Second, we should raise one another up not just for the purpose of raising another, but so that it becomes habit to exhort rather than to condemn. Often on the Message (radio station) they will remind us that, "Practice makes perfect, so we should be careful what we practice." We need to be more deliberate about our words and actions.

Third, each day we have the ability to make newer and better decisions. Even if yesterday was a day full of sin and regret, this day is new and full of new possibilities. Make better choices starting right now.

Which disciplines are most helpful to keep you close to God?

Are you raising others up even as you work on yourself?

How will you keep from hardening your heart?

Author: Pastor Sandi Phillips, Wesley Chapel UMC



## March 9

### Scriptures For the Day:

Psalm	OT	Epistle	Gospel
am: 50, 59, 60 pm: 19, 46	Deut 9:23-10:5	Heb 4:1-10	John 3:16-21


### Reflecting on John 3:16-21

I am sure many people have heard of this passage. It talks about why our Savior was sent to us in the first place. The Lord says He was sent to save the world and all who simply believe in His power, will receive eternal life. This really resounds with me in times of struggle.

Sometimes in life, we can get busy, sin, and lose our path. Whether it's skipping church, preoccupying ourselves with silly tasks, or just forgetting what is important, John 3: 16-21 helps us take back our path, and live by the light. By living near the light, we remember what is important and take back our paths. Families become closer, friendships last longer, and people are strengthened.

I think this is what the Lord is trying to tell us. No matter what we do. If we remember to go back to the light, God will always accept us for our flaws and mistakes, and will help us to build our lives up as high as they can go. It's this mercy and love that helps keep us on track. So today I ask you -- How far are you from your light, your path? What can you do to help yourself return to God's grace?

Author: Kaleigh Breisch, Living Grace Lutheran Church



March 10

**Scriptures For the Day:**

<b>Psalm</b>	<b>OT</b>	<b>Epistle</b>	<b>Gospel</b>
am: 40, 54 pm: 51	Deut 10:12-22	Heb 4:11-16	John 3:22-36

**Reflecting on Psalm 51**

The blood of Jesus is the holy Hyssop that washes us as white as snow. And when the Lord looks at us, he sees the blood of Jesus, who was without sin, covering us and making us clean in his sight. King David longed to be cleansed and to have his sin removed from God's sight. Further than that, he longed for wisdom in his deepest heart. God had said of David; "a man after my own heart". And yet he sinned and needed forgiveness as much as any other man.

In thinking about my own sin, I often thought it came from my deepest heart, from the hidden place in me that is known only to me. But I now know that my secret heart is the place where God has worked the most change in me. It's the place that whispers to me to change from something I've said or a decision I've made that is sinful. The wisdom to recognize my sin and to be open to what God is teaching me all resides in my heart, in the place where only He can reach.

Why do we keep sinning when we know that it's wrong to do?

Author: Pastor TJ Mount, Araby UMC



**Scriptures For the Day:**

<b>Psalm</b>	<b>OT</b>	<b>Epistle</b>	<b>Gospel</b>
am: 55 pm: 138, 139	Deut 11:18-28	Heb 5:1-10	John 4:1-26

**Reflecting on Psalm 139 (while waiting for my mom after church)**

I love birthdays. I've had seven of them. 1-2-3-4-5-6-7

I just learned from my teacher that everybody I see walking around here also has a Birthday Zero. That's your "Birth-Day" -- the day you were born. (Mr C agreed when he came to move the chairs.)

David was a very important king in Bible times. He wrote a song about his Birthday Zero but it's also about Birthday Zero for everybody. Here is David's Happy Birthday Psalm that my teacher read with me: (v. 13 - 16)

"God, you shaped me first inside, then out; you formed me inside my mother's womb. I thank you, High God—you're awesome! (High five to God!)

Body and soul, I am marvelously made! I worship in adoration—what a creation! You know me inside and out, You know every bone in my body; You know exactly how I was made, bit by bit, how I was formed from nothing into something.

Like an open book, you watched me grow from conception to birth. All the stages of my life were spread out before you, All the days of my life were prepared-before I even lived one day." (Before my Birthday Zero.)

My Aunt G is going to have a baby soon. I can't wait to meet my new cousin and celebrate its Birth-Day. God knows that baby now even though it isn't even born yet.

We're kids but God knows us. God made us. God has plans for us.

God knows you. God made you. God has plans for you even if you're grown up.

Author: Leila Mielke, FaithPoint



**March 12**

**Scriptures For the Day:**

<b>Psalm</b>	<b>OT</b>	<b>Epistle</b>	<b>Gospel</b>
am: 24, 29 pm: 8, 84	Jere 1:1-10	1 Cor 3:11-23	Mark 3:31-4:9

**Reflecting on 1 Corinthians 3:11-23**

1 Corinthians 3:19 “For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God’s sight.”

We live in the Information Age. Google tells us anything we need to know. Yet, even it uses the Bible to respond to: “Google, describe God.” “There is nothing that anyone can know about God’s nature unless He reveals it to humankind.”

Is this what Paul says in his letter? The Corinthian Greeks thought they were the wisest of men. They did not recognize that this passion for worldly wisdom blinded them to spiritual truth. Paul tells the Corinthian believers not to deceive themselves. To be truly wise, they should become “fools”.

We think of ourselves as being far wiser than the ancient Greeks. Yet, Paul proposes that we become fools to better understand God. We must look beyond earthly wisdom and knowledge; for what are these but man searching out the structure of God’s creation? Is it not far better for us to seek out and worship the God who created it all?

Today, look beyond knowledge of this world to find true spiritual wisdom.

Lord God, teach us that the truth that leads us to You comes through knowing Your Son, Jesus.  
Amen

Author: Patricia Huff, Wesley Chapel



**March 13**

**Scriptures For the Day:**

<b>Psalm</b>	<b>OT</b>	<b>Epistle</b>	<b>Gospel</b>
am: 56, 57, 58 pm: 64, 65	Jere 1:11-19	Rom 1:1-15	John 4:27-42

**Reflecting on John 4:27-42**

**In this together**

In those rare moments when I'm out in the world alone, at the grocery store, at the coffee shop or in some other crowded but solitary place, I often find myself overwhelmed by the diversity of humanity and God's immense love for each and every one of us. Jesus shows us time and time again the value of the overlooked among us, and the part we are called to play in bringing about the fullness of God's kingdom. In this passage from John, Jesus talks about how we are called to be both the sowers and the reapers in the fields -- the planters and the gatherers, each doing different work but rejoicing in the harvest together. Everyone has value, a place and a purpose in God's economy.

Who are the overlooked in your life? The ones with whom you are resistant to work and share in the harvest?

What obstacles are in the way for you to fully participate with them in kingdom work?

Are you in a season of sowing, or reaping?

**Author: Jillian Trawick, FaithPoint**





**March 14**

**Scriptures For the Day:**

<b>Psalm</b>	<b>OT</b>	<b>Epistle</b>	<b>Gospel</b>
am: 61, 62 pm: 68	Jere 2:1-13	Rom 1:16-25	John 4:43-54

**Reflecting on Romans 1:16-25**

For whom or what do we worship? This question has perplexed people since time began. We are all aware that our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, sacrificed himself on the cross to pay for the sins of all mankind from the beginning of creation until the end of time.

But just how exactly does that knowledge affect our daily lives? Do we live a life that brings honor and glory to God or do we live a life that serves ourselves? Does the power of the flesh within us serve only to please our daily wants and desires or do we live a life that is controlled by the Holy Spirit who dwells within each of us to do good works for all you meet? Are the fruits that you produce for immediate use here on earth or are they fruits which will build up your treasure in heaven?

There are many questions, much to think about and to discuss. Start a conversation today with a friend and share your faith.

Ask yourself today this simple question. Who and what do I worship?

Author: Larry Myers, Lay Minister, Ijamsville UMC



March 15

Scriptures For the Day:

Psalm	OT	Epistle	Gospel
am: 72 pm: 119:73-96	Jere 3:6-18	Rom 1:28-2:11	John 5:1-18

**Reflecting on Psalm 119**

Psalm 119: 75 - 77

“I know, Lord, that your laws are righteous, and that in faithfulness you have afflicted me. May your unfailing love be my comfort, according to your promise to your servant. Let compassion come to me that I may live, for your law is my delight.”

There was a song a few years back that said “I beg your pardon, I never promised you a rose garden. Along with the sunshine, there's gotta be a little rain sometimes”. As much as we would like it, our lives are not rose gardens. We all experience disappointments, trials, and sometimes unbelievable pain and hopelessness. Why would a loving God let these difficult times invade our lives? Why would he allow His children to suffer loss and despair? Perhaps to get our attention? Perhaps to focus us back onto Him and his Word?

God wants us to trust in Him and know that He loves us, especially in dark times. But we sometimes forget and think God has abandoned us. We try to “fix” things, but we are doomed to fail if we believe that we are in control.

Through prayer, God gives us strength to persevere. He shows us our failings, and reminds us that we are all flawed, but we are all still Brothers and Sisters in Christ. He teaches us compassion, patience and unconditional love. He shows us that faith and giving ourselves and our troubles over to Him frees us and lifts our burdens.

What can you turn over to God today?

Author: Joy P. Klubnik, Living Grace Lutheran Church



**March 16**

**Scriptures For the Day:**

<b>Psalm</b>	<b>OT</b>	<b>Epistle</b>	<b>Gospel</b>
Psalm 74	Jere 4:9-10, 19-28	Rom 2:12-24	John 5:19-29

**Reflecting on John 5: 19 - 29**

The Old Testament is full of stories of God's wrath for not following His laws. His people felt abandoned, even though they knowingly broke the Law. The Miracle is God loves us so much He sent His Son, Jesus, to teach us a new way where we can spend eternity in a new life with Him.

Jesus tells us in John 5:19-29 that eternal life is available to all the people and that God gave Jesus the authority to judge us all - pagan, Jew, living and dead. The laws are still there to guide us, but we are now judged differently.

We have a way of making things so complicated and asking so many questions that we lose the ability to totally love and to trust God. What a loving God we have to give **EVERYONE** the ability to be forgiven - no matter what we did or will do - simply by listening to Jesus' teachings and believing in Him. Just by believing, we are given a whole new life, full of love, peace and grace no matter our circumstances. Awesome!

Imagine a time when you did something wrong, that you knew it was wrong before you did it and it made a close friend angry and turn away from you. How did you feel once you saw the consequences of what you did and all you wanted was to be forgiven and feel love from that person again? The punch in the pit of your stomach, loss of their love and knowing you hurt them was crushing.

How would you feel if all you needed to do was to hear them out, accept that you were wrong and believe in them; that they would forgive you and your relationship would be fully restored? It takes even less than this to be forgiven by God and accepted by Christ and is even more life altering than a restored friendship.

Author: Carol Bowen, FaithPoint



March 17

**Scriptures For the Day:**

<b>Psalm</b>	<b>OT</b>	<b>Epistle</b>	<b>Gospel</b>
am: 69 pm: 73	Jere 5:1-9	Rom 2:25-3:18	John 5:30-47

**Reflecting on John 5: 30-47**

Perhaps it's the increasing role that social media plays in our lives, but we live in an age where – like it or not – we think more and more about what we present to the world. Every “like” we click or link we post tells people something about what we think, want, or how we’re trying to define ourselves. Are we witty? Compassionate? Irreverent? Thoughtful? Social media user or not -- our words, opinions and statements say much about ourselves and our values.

In this text, Jesus uses his words to point not to himself, but to God. He testifies not on his own behalf, looking for praise or affirmation from people, but with words focused on the role God has for him in the Kingdom. Jesus represents his Father, and points to his Father to define himself as the one who has come to fulfill the scripture.

Sometimes I read about the way a person chooses to characterize themselves online and it doesn't ring true as authentic to me. Jesus recognizes that the people hearing his words may also not be able to recognize them as coming from God. Still, Jesus's words are different – they point past him, to God's word. And in God's word, we have an opportunity to understand timeless truth.

*Prayer: God, Help us to know Jesus by understanding you. Allow us to recognize you. Help us to consider the ways we point to ourselves when we can point to you and your work in our lives. Amen.*

Author: Laura Ketchum-Jahn, Living Grace Lutheran Church



March 18

**Scriptures For the Day:**

<b>Psalm</b>	<b>OT</b>	<b>Epistle</b>	<b>Gospel</b>
am: 75, 76 pm: 23, 27	Jere 5:20-31	Rom 3:19-31	John 7:1-13

**Reflecting on Psalm 23**

How many of us would like to have more tranquility in our lives? If so, take your devotional time today, pick up your Bible and read the 23rd Psalm.

The 23rd Psalm is probably the best known and best loved of all David's Psalms. Whenever I read it, a feeling of calm comes over me. Why is that? As you read the 23rd Psalm, picture the images that the verses convey. In verses 1 to 3, I feel the tranquility I mentioned earlier. My focus is verse 2b – my mind goes to 'quiet waters'.

Water is a retreat place for me. The Pontius family is blessed to have waterfront property on the Eastern Shore and we are fortunate to go down many times a year. Upon arrival, I usually walk to the pier, sit and reflect. Where are your retreat place(s)? When all the electronic devices are turned OFF and put away, will it give you the quiet time you need for prayer, Bible study, devotional reading, etc?

The images change in verses 4 to 6. David knows the Lord is with him, as we know He is with us, through thick and thin - with Him beside us on our journey there will be nothing to fear. He will be there to give us comfort. He has prepared a place for us. Good things will follow me and we will dwell with the Lord forever!

How often have we wished for nothing more than to lie down to enjoy peace and quiet - to rest and to revive amid our harried lives? If we think it is God who demands superhuman effort and impossible schedules, we are wrong. God wants us to move steadily forward on our journey through life, but rest and refreshment along the way are an integral part of His plan. Take time today to 'lie down' and reflect on Psalm 23.

Author: Judy Pontius, Wesley Chapel UMC



# March 19

## Scriptures For the Day:

Psalm	OT	Epistle	Gospel
am: 93, 96 pm: 34	Jere 6:9-15	1 Cor 6:12-20	Mark 5:1-20

### Reflecting on Psalm 96

This Psalm is saying that we need to praise God no matter what. No matter what is going on, we need to take time to remember God.

When we give God gifts, it is like giving God our heart. It isn't just money and things. It is all about showing God we love him.

When we sing, it is like a gift to God with our voices. When we play with friends, it is like a gift to God with our bodies. And we are being like God's love to the people we are with. When we make art, it is like we are sharing God's love with others through that, too.

When everyone does their part, we will be able to share God's love with everyone all over the world. When we praise God with others, we are being the hands and feet of God like that one song, "If We are the Body" by Casting Crowns.

Author: Eden Bishop, FaithPoint



**March 20**

**Scriptures For the Day:**

<b>Psalm</b>	<b>OT</b>	<b>Epistle</b>	<b>Gospel</b>
am: 80 pm: 77, 79	Jere 7:1-15	Rom 4:1-12	John 7:14-36

**Reflecting on Psalm 77**

The Israelites had fled their former lives in Egypt. Moses and his brother, Aaron, had led them into the desert wilderness. They made camp for the night, having just finished a supper of manna food that God had dropped from the sky.

Men, women and children gather by the campfire for some family entertainment. It's here that the dramatic retelling of their epic journey across the Red Sea begins . . .

“When the Red Sea saw you, Oh God, Its water looked and trembled! The sea quaked to its very depths.

The clouds poured down rain; The thunder rumbled in the sky. Your arrows of lightning flashed. Your thunder roared from the whirlwind; The lightning lit up the world! The earth trembled and shook.

Your road led through the sea, Your pathway through the mighty waters – A pathway no one knew was there!

What hard roads have you travelled in the past? What hard roads are you travelling now?  
Do you trust that God will provide, leading you safely on “a pathway no one knew was there”?  
Tell someone about God's provision to you.

Author: Linda Dochter, FaithPoint



March 21

**Scriptures For the Day:**

<b>Psalm</b>	<b>OT</b>	<b>Epistle</b>	<b>Gospel</b>
am: 78:1-39 pm: 78:40-72	Jere 7:21-34	Rom 4:13-25	John 7:37-52

**Reflecting on Psalm 78: 1-39**

I lay awake in the morning and look out my bedroom window before I ever get out of bed. I have done this for years, I never know what I may see. I once saw a hummingbird flying near my window. Today I saw a beautiful sky change from silver to pink. I don't know whether I am talking to God or God is talking to me, or even if it matters.

The first thought that came into my mind when I read this Psalm was the song "Teach Your Children Well". It is easy to turn to God in times of stress, and God will be there for us. But we need to teach our children that God is there for us always. God is there with us during our best times, during happiness and peace, and it is often too easy to forget He is there.

Children watch us more than they listen to us. Whether we are teaching our children love and peace by enjoying nature, empathy by helping a homeless person change, or sharing of ourselves by volunteering our talents, our children will learn to be like us, for good or bad. They will carry on God's message, if we show our children how it is done.

Author: Laura Wood, Wesley Chapel UMC





March 22

**Scriptures For the Day:**

<b>Psalm</b>	<b>OT</b>	<b>Epistle</b>	<b>Gospel</b>
am: 119:97-120 pm: 81, 82	Jere 8:18-9:6	Rom 5:1-11	John 8:12-20

**Reflecting on Romans 5:1-11**


Today's scripture, Romans 5:1-11 talks about who we were and how God's love worked for us; In v6 says, 'we were weak and ungodly'. It means God loved us before we knew God or God's love. There had been God's grace even before we were aware of it. This grace makes God's grace/love great. We United Methodist Church calls it 'Prevenient Grace'.

In v8 says, 'we were sinners'. God hates sin but God loves us. That's why God accepts us, pours out God's love over us. God's love covers multitude of sins. (1 Peter 4:8)

Verse 10 says, 'we were enemies'. Some people have a question, 'How can we love our enemies who killed our beloved one?' God showed us the ultimate example. We killed God's Son Jesus Christ but God loves us, God's enemy. We were reconciled to God through Jesus Christ.

Please focus on those three words about us today; weak (ungodly), sinners, and enemies. And remember who we were and how God's love, grace, and truth have worked to save us, to make us free, and to make us God's family.

Author: Pastor Myungha Baek, Pleasant Grove and Mountain View UMC



**March 23**

**Scriptures For the Day:**

<b>Psalm</b>	<b>OT</b>	<b>Epistle</b>	<b>Gospel</b>
am: 42, 43 pm: 85, 86	Jere 10:11-24	Rom 5:12-21	John 8:21-32

**Reflecting on Psalm 86:1-11**

At an early age, I was pretty much “alone” and “scared” because my parents were divorced and I was shuffled from one to another. If it wasn’t for my grandmother, I probably wouldn’t have known the Lord. I would crawl up on my grandmother’s bed and she would read from the Bible to me. And, even at a young age, I listened and took it all in.

When I didn’t have her around anymore, I found that the only time I felt like I wasn’t alone and scared was when I turned to God in prayer. We would have simple talks and He provided me with a sense of right and wrong...Comfort when I was lonely...A connection to Him that helped me to feel safe from people and situations I felt threatened by.

I learned to talk to God everyday and I didn't just ask for “things” like some people do, I felt so grateful for all the things He provided for me every day. When I was older and sick with cancer, I took Him at his word. I trusted Him...I obeyed Him, and I wasn't scared of what I went through because of it.

Now that I’m a middle aged woman, I still talk to God every day. I never cease to praise His holy name and to ask forgiveness because I still make mistakes. I think about His power and the creation of this world and I am in awe. Someday, I hope to be in his Great House and walk by his side.

Do you have a relationship with God?

Author: Margaret Boumel, Flint Hill UMC



March 24

**Scriptures For the Day:**

<b>Psalm</b>	<b>OT</b>	<b>Epistle</b>	<b>Gospel</b>
am: 88 pm: 91, 92	Jere 11:1-8, 14-20	Rom 6:1-11	John 8:33-47

**Reflecting on Psalm 91**

It's been one of those days. We've all had them. It started with a distress call from Dad early this morning. "No milk at the nursing home. Go get me some," he said tearfully. So I did, talked to the staff about the situation and feeling sure the problem would be resolved.

Soon another call from Dad's nurse. "He wants to leave now," she said.

"Tell him I busy taking care of Mom."

"OK, I'll see you tomorrow," he replied. It took some quick thinking that got through that little crisis.

Next to the bank. So many questions, paperwork, forms, signatures. Something so simple to me seemed to become such a huge ordeal. Off to the Social Security office. This office is designed to be an exercise in patience, I've decided. Again more forms, questions and signatures. Today, my pestilence was bureaucracy.

Psalm 91 speaks of darkness. It doesn't necessarily mean night, but feeling lost. Constant worry and being overwhelmed is my stalker. When will it become manageable?

As evening arrives, I sit with my Mom who is growing tired and weary. I enjoy our TV time together. We talk and enjoy a bowl of ice cream. This is how God takes care of me. I just need to take the time to feel God's love.

God shows us His love in many subtle ways. We must remember to tell God through our prayers and actions that we love Him.

Author: Carolyn Maher, Wesley Chapel UMC



March 25

**Scriptures For the Day:**

<b>Psalm</b>	<b>OT</b>	<b>Epistle</b>	<b>Gospel</b>
am: 87, 90 pm: 136	Jere 13:1-11	Rom 6:12-23	John 8:47-59

**Reflecting on Psalm 136 Forever . . .**

This meeting is taking forever. Waiting for the doctor to come is taking forever! Spring break won't come in forever!

The moments we dread or that require patience from us seem to slow down to a snail's pace. How is the week leading up to vacation so much slower than the week of vacation itself? The three days before our escape to the beach surely last way longer than our six days at the beach. Yet those six days feel like minutes.

Our concept of time is influenced by our current circumstances. Time speeds up or slows down depending on how we are feeling at that point and how engaged we are with the task at hand.

But do we truly understand "forever"? Forever is defined in the Merriam-Webster dictionary as: "For a limitless time" and "For a continuous time"

Every other line of Psalm 136 says, "His love endures forever." "His love endures forever." "His love endures forever."

"His love...endures...forever." His love is limitless and continuous.

Our meetings end. The doctor comes. Spring break comes. The moments we dread pass. The moments we cherish pass. Our concept of time does not change but the Creator of the universe loves me for all time.

I cannot destroy that love, I cannot change His mind about loving me. It is limitless and continuous . . .it is forever.

I rest in that joyful knowledge and I push on so that others might come into knowing His "forever" love as well.

Author: The Gull Family, FaithPoint



March 26

**Scriptures For the Day:**

<b>Psalm</b>	<b>OT</b>	<b>Epistle</b>	<b>Gospel</b>
am: 66, 67 pm: 19, 46	Jere 14:1-9, 17-22	Gal 4:21-5:1	Mark 8:11-21

**Reflecting on Mark 8:11-21**

We must always remember God provides and is in control. This Bible reading contains physical and spiritual references. References are made to the numbers seven and twelve.

The number seven, to me represents God's creation, it's perfection and Christ's death and resurrection, both completed acts. The number twelve -- the twelve tribes of Israel, and the twelve disciples -- represents ties to the old and new testaments.

The loaves of bread are tangible but spiritually represent the bread of life being Christ Jesus. Yeast is also tangible and can represent vanity and conceit. We must be careful that our pride does not consume us. Everything we have and are able to do, are gifts from God. We can do nothing on our own and God is with us always. God provided for our salvation over 2,000 years ago and continues to provide for our needs everyday. Therefore, we do not need to doubt or question, for we walk by faith not by sight.

Have vanity and/or conceit kept you from having a closer relationship with Christ Jesus?

Has doubt kept you from having a closer relationship with Christ Jesus?

Author: Donna S., Living Grace Lutheran Church



**March 27**

**Scriptures For the Day:**

<b>Psalm</b>	<b>OT</b>	<b>Epistle</b>	<b>Gospel</b>
am: 89:1-18 pm: 89:19-52	Jere 16:10-21	Rom 7:1-12	John 6:1-15

**Reflecting on John 6:1-15**

Our Bible devotion today tells us about a time when Jesus and his disciples had some leftovers. It is a familiar story.

"Bring it to me," Jesus said. Then he gave thanks, blessed it, and began breaking it into pieces to pass around to the people. When they had all had enough to eat, Jesus said, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted." They gathered up twelve baskets full!

Jesus took the small gift that the boy gave and used it in a special way.

All of us could learn a lesson from the little boy. He didn't have very much -- only five pieces of bread and two small fish -- but he was willing to share what he had and Jesus used it to feed a huge crowd of people.

We can also learn that God often blesses us with much more than we need. When that happens, what do we do with the leftovers? Jesus told the disciples to gather up the leftovers so that nothing would be wasted. The Bible doesn't tell us what they did with the leftovers, but my guess is that they probably used them to feed more hungry people.

Some of us may only have a little. Some of us have been blessed with much more than we need. Either way, God is pleased when we share with others.

**Author: Dinah Benson, Wesley Chapel**



March 28

**Scriptures For the Day:**

<b>Psalm</b>	<b>OT</b>	<b>Epistle</b>	<b>Gospel</b>
am: 97, 99, 100 pm: 94, 95	Jere 17:19-27	Rom 7:13-25	John 6:16-27

**Reflecting on John 6:16-27**

I can't do it alone. I need help! In this Scripture, Jesus approached the disciples in the boat. He joined them in the boat. This is a comforting thought but it can be hard to remember.

Like the Disciples, I need to be reminded to ask Jesus to be alongside me in my boat.

But also I need to remember that Jesus is the captain of my boat. As soon as I take over the steering, I am doomed. Jesus isn't just be a passenger. It's not enough to just invite Him on my boat, but I've got to let Him steer, let Him be the one who yells the commands, and remember I am only the **deck hand!**

Now, as promised, He is alongside me and I don't have to do it alone. It doesn't mean I won't have any storms, but I have the assurance that He is by my side during each storm. I only need to ask, surrender and trust Him.

Let Jesus on board and take the wheel of your boat. He can get you safely past all our obstacles, and safely through rough seas if we only invite Him and let Him steer our boat.

Author: Paula Thorson, FaithPoint Online



# March 29

## Scriptures For the Day:

Psalm	OT	Epistle	Gospel
am: 101, 109 pm: 119:121-144	Jere 18:1-11	Rom 8:1-11	John 6:27-40

### Reflecting on John 6: 27 - 40

#### Jesus is the Bread of Life

Bread comes in many forms. There is the regular loaf of bread, banana bread, french bread, Italian bread, pumpernickel, yada...yada...yada. Breads are often included along with many meals. Then there are doughnuts! Nothing goes with them better than coffee! That is the drawing card we needed when I helped with my Bible study group in Nha Trang, Vietnam in 1969. Coffee and doughnuts was the perfect draw for people to attend our Easter Sunrise Service we planned for Easter morning. We got approval to use our patrolled beach along the beautiful South China Sea. The view there is tremendous of each day's sunrise.

We put ads at every option we had on both the Army and Air Force bases. Our Bible group of about 25 thought that we might be lucky to have maybe 150 people attend. We set up a sound system for the Army chaplain to use. We set up tables to serve the coffee and doughnuts to hopefully at least 150 people.

Then the jeeps and military transports of all sizes showed up! Somewhere over 800 troops appeared. The coffee and doughnuts did not last long. But that did not matter.

The bread that they were really after was the bread of life through that beachfront celebration of the rising of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Author: Thomas Maher Jr., Wesley Chapel UMC





**March 30**

**Scriptures For the Day:**

<b>Psalm</b>	<b>OT</b>	<b>Epistle</b>	<b>Gospel</b>
am: 69 pm: 73	Jere 22:13-23	Rom 8:12-27	John 6:41-51

**Reflecting on Romans 8: 12 - 27**

**The Groaning Creation**

As we continue this Lenten journey together, we continue to examine ourselves. We continue to look at and let go of those things in our life that hold us in bondage. But today, I invite you to examine creation as well. As you go about your day today, notice how creation is “groaning in labor pains” to “be set free from its bondage to decay.”

Brothers and sisters in Christ, it is us, “the children of God,” that are called not only to work to restore our relationship with each other and God but also to restore all of creation into relationship with God.

May the Creator of heaven and earth give us the ears to hear the groaning in labor pains and may we respond with the love of God to restore all of creation into relationship with God. In the Name of Jesus the Christ, Amen.

**Author: Pastor TJ Mount, Araby UMC**



**March 31**

**Scriptures For the Day:**

<b>Psalm</b>	<b>OT</b>	<b>Epistle</b>	<b>Gospel</b>
am: 107:1-32 pm: 107:33-43	Jere 23:1-8	Rom 8:28-39	John 6:52-59

**Reflecting on Romans 8: 28-39**

These verses are some of the most comforting verses in the Bible. They are like God's love letter to us. They show us God's character, his awesome love, and scream to us that God is for us! What a blessing and reassurance to know that God is for us and He wants us to be with Him!

God wants to offer every person the opportunity to be in relationship with him. He loved us so much that he sent his Son as a gift to rescue us and gives us the choice and the privilege to accept this gift. A gift not dependent on our performance but on His sacrifice. When we make that choice by faith, He then equips us to live the Christian life, gives us the Holy Spirit to dwell in us, to intercede for us, to guide us, and to strengthen us. Such a tremendous love gives us strength and confidence to face every challenge in life

God will use all of our life- even our mistakes, failures and difficulties -- for good, to bring us more and more into the image of Christ. When we trust God to take care of us, before we ever see the problem, we already have won. Knowing God is with us and for us, that the Holy Spirit strengthens us in our weakness, and that God loves us all the time, we are more than conquerors!

We can be assured that if God is for us, nothing can be against us. Nothing will ever separate us from God's love. NOTHING can separate us from the love of Christ!

Knowing that God loves you this much, does this make you think about others and yourself differently?

Can anything separate us from the love God has for us?

Author: Cindy Hering, FaithPoint



**April 1**

**Scriptures For the Day:**

<b>Psalm</b>	<b>OT</b>	<b>Epistle</b>	<b>Gospel</b>
am: 102, 108 pm: 33	Jere 23:9-15	Rom 9:1-18	John 6:60-71

**Reflecting on John 6:60-71**

65: And He said, "For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father."

I had surgery coming up and had a lot of anxiety and was very fearful - almost to the point of calling the doctor and cancelling the surgery. I wanted to pray about it and read the Bible that I carried in Viet Nam. I could not find my small Bible but found a pocket version of the Book of John. I thought I had given my life over to Jesus long ago as a child and again as an older man but not at all as I found out. I am not ashamed of this testimony of the Lord Jesus for in Him, there is great power and love. This is what I prayed that changed me:

"Lord Jesus, I know I am a sinner and that you gave your life for my sins. I ask you to come into my heart, mind, and spirit and to be with me always now and forever. Amen."

It was as if a door opened and I was let in and was a new man - fully trusting in my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. I was without any fear whatsoever. I know Jesus was with me through my four and a half hour surgery and I trust Him to be with me always.

Can you say with confidence that you have allowed Jesus to be in your life?

Author: Russ Charette, Ijamsville UMC



April 2

**Scriptures For the Day:**

<b>Psalm</b>	<b>OT</b>	<b>Epistle</b>	<b>Gospel</b>
am: 118 pm: 145	Jere 23:16-32	1 Cor 9:19-27	Mark 8:31-9:1

**Reflecting on 1 Corinthians 9:19-27**

This Lenten season, as with all those before it, we repent of our sins, we grieve our shortcomings, and we bow our heads humbly to God, giving thanks for sending His son to ultimately die for us so that we may be saved from ourselves. Though, in a world that can often seem to be a tempestuous, modern-day Corinth, I ponder what Paul would think of us today. Stripping away our advances in technology and medicine, and the evolution of music, fashion, and art, would people today evoke a different message from Paul or would he find that his letter to the Corinthians still applies as much now as it did then? We've had a couple of millennia to get it right, so we must be better now...right?

As we pray that Paul would find that we have achieved a higher level of goodness and human compassion, may we go forth today and every day consciously and purposefully "becoming all things to ALL people." Let us passionately seek to understand those least like ourselves; welcome points-of-view least alike to our own; and fervently pursue a Christ-like life even if doing so jeopardizes our popularity or stretches the boundaries of our comfort zones. We can do it.

Cue the music - "I'm starting with the wo/man in the mirror."

Mahatma Ghandi said, "We but mirror the world. All the tendencies present in the outer world are to be found in the world of our body. If we could change ourselves, the tendencies in the world would also change."

In the context of 1 Corinthians 9:19-27, do Paul and Ghandi agree on what we are called to do in order to be worthy of Christ's sacrifice? What can you do to ensure you are answering the call?

Author: Katie Filano, UMC Baltimore Washington Conference, Central Maryland District



April 3

**Scriptures For the Day:**

<b>Psalm</b>	<b>OT</b>	<b>Epistle</b>	<b>Gospel</b>
am: 31 pm: 35	Jere 24:1-10	Rom 9:19-33	John 9:1-17

**Reflecting on Romans 9: 16-33**

A potter uses the same clay to make some pottery with a special purpose and some for everyday use. Similarly, God has made each of you -- is made of the same flesh and bone. He has a purpose for each of you. If you pursue righteousness by your own effort, then you will not attain your goal. But all who claim righteousness by faith in Jesus Christ are justified by God's mercy and the work of their hands are to bring glory and honor to God.

**Prayer**

Almighty God and Father, Creator of all things, You are Truth, Love and Mercy. I stand before you in justification and righteousness because I accept the gift of Your mercy and grace through Your Son Jesus. Thank You for the gifts You have given me to use here on earth to bring honor to You. Give me the wisdom to discover my gifts and the understanding to use them for Your glory and to fulfill Your purpose for my life. It's in the name of Jesus I pray, Amen.

**Key thought**

Justification and a right standing with God cannot be attained by your efforts. The only path to righteousness is through faith in Jesus Christ.

Author: Dennis Stark, FaithPoint



April 4

**Scriptures For the Day:**

<b>Psalm</b>	<b>OT</b>	<b>Epistle</b>	<b>Gospel</b>
am: 121, 122, 123 pm: 124, 125, 126	Jere 25:8-17	Rom 10:1-13	John 9:18-41

**Reflecting on Psalm 121: 1-8**

“I lift up my eyes to the mountains— where does my help come from?

My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.

He will not let your foot slip. He who watches over you will not slumber;  
indeed, He who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

The Lord watches over you— the Lord is your shade at your right hand;  
the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night.

The Lord will keep you from all harm, He will watch over your life;

the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.

I feel encouraged when I read Psalm 121. Given the threats in the world today – even in our cities and neighborhoods – and the fears that can overwhelm us, Psalm 121 makes me take a deep breath and remember to trust in the Lord and His plan for me and our world. I recognize that evil may still overwhelm me, but this is not God’s intent for me and my life.

When things get scary and fear grips me, when I feel helpless, God’s promises are reassuring and comforting. I have often imagined that if I find my life threatened, that I will recite a promise over and over, even to death. God’s promises give me peace.

Author: Joy Fernon, Living Grace Lutheran Church



April 5

**Scriptures For the Day:**

<b>Psalm</b>	<b>OT</b>	<b>Epistle</b>	<b>Gospel</b>
am: 119:145-176 pm: 128, 129, 130	Jere 25:30-38	Rom 10:14-21	John 10:1-18

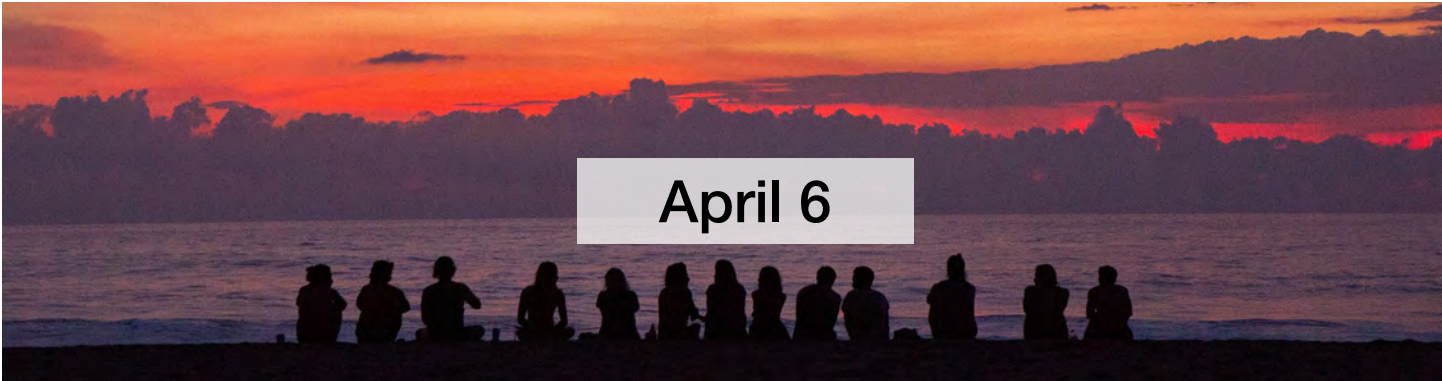
**Reflecting on Romans 10: 14 - 21**

Have you ever had some really great news? Maybe you just got engaged. How did you feel? I bet you were ecstatic. And in all of your excitement, did you want to keep it to yourself or did you want to tell everyone you knew? I am sure you made phone calls, sent emails, and you probably put the great news in the newspaper. You wanted to share your great news with everyone. You proclaimed it to everyone you knew.

As we enter this Lenten season, we are about to come upon the greatest news of all time. That news is that Jesus Christ died for your sins. He has forgiven you of all of your sins and has guaranteed you a place with him in heaven. If you can tell the world about your engagement, how can you not proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ and your free gift of grace to all?

Romans 10:14 “. . . how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him?”

Author: Rod Fry, Licensed Lay Minister, Wesley Chapel UMC



April 6

Scriptures For the Day:

Psalm	OT	Epistle	Gospel
am: 131, 132, 133 pm: 140, 142	Jere 26:1-16	Rom 11:1-12	John 10:19-42

**Reflecting on Psalm 133**

Psalm 133:1

*1 Look at how good and pleasing it is when families live together as one!*

As I walk into the store, I see the folks who are in the line, on the phone, not paying attention to the cashier, or their purchases, or their tasks. My condemnation of them is acute: how can they be so self-involved? And yet, if I am honest, this is the way I walk through life sometimes – distracted, not observant, intentionally not connecting with others.

This is not how God made me to be. God commanded that I love my holy siblings here on earth, and that I do it with the sweetness that flows from God first, like the oil that sets us apart as God’s chosen children. God put us together with a Holy purpose and connection.

And, when I can listen and obey the One Who Made Me, loving my siblings, I see “how wonderful, how beautiful when we get along.” It’s refreshing, renewing, life-giving, like dew.

Today, how can we look beyond our selfishness to see our Big God Family the way God sees us?

Author: Beth Posey, FaithPoint Online





April 7

**Scriptures For the Day:**

<b>Psalm</b>	<b>OT</b>	<b>Epistle</b>	<b>Gospel</b>
am: 22 pm: 141, 143	Jere 29:1, 4-13	Rom 11:13-24	John 11:1-27 or 12:1-10

**Reflecting on the Old Testament and Epistle readings**

Who doesn't love a great story? It's pretty common to the human experience. Story is a concept that transcends culture and is probably as old as language itself. When someone can weave a narrative that captures our hearts and minds, we are transported to new worlds and different times in history.

Some of my favorite stories are redemption stories. I think of movies like *It's A Wonderful Life*, *The Shawshank Redemption*, and *Good Will Hunting*. In these stories we see characters that are broken down to their core. When they hit rock bottom, it is then that they find a path to redemption, usually through another character acting as their guide showing them the hope in a seemingly hopeless situation. There's a reason these stories sell movie tickets. It's because we can all relate to them in some shape or form. All of us have encountered an obstacle in our lives that seemed insurmountable.

The really cool thing is that the Bible is also a redemption story. A common thought line throughout all of scripture is redemption, God's never-ending grace. From the exile of the Hebrews in Babylon in Jeremiah, to the salvation of the Gentiles in Romans, we see God at work, longing to redeem his children and bring us back into relationship with him.

God is our creator and our redeemer. We find courage and comfort in the fact that no matter what we have done God still wants us. God still loves us, and that can never change.

You are not GOING to be redeemed. You ARE redeemed.  
(Recommended listening: I Am Redeemed by Big Daddy Weave)

Author: Ben Trawick, FaithPoint Online Campus Pastor



April 8

**Scriptures For the Day:**

<b>Psalm</b>	<b>OT</b>	<b>Epistle</b>	<b>Gospel</b>
am: 137, 144 pm: 42, 43	Jere 31:27-34	Rom 11:25-36	John 11:28-44 or 12:37-50

**Reflecting on Romans 11:25-36**

We have all been given the freedom to choose whether or not we will follow Jesus. Equally so, we decide whether to follow the scriptures within the Holy Word and their applications to our daily life. No matter what we choose, God sent his beloved son, Jesus, to this world to forgive us of our sins and change our ways as a gracious and loving God.

As human beings, it's our nature to want to pursue our own desires. That impedes what is planned for our lives because we don't know what is best. We forget that our wisdom and understanding does not go to the same depth of that of the Lord. Yet when we turn our lives over to him, he will guide us in all of our ways.

The beauty of having a gracious and loving father is that God unfailingly bestows upon all individuals His promise to be there for them and offers his gifts to them for when that time comes. For God bestows the bounty upon those who place him first in all their ways.

May all honor and glory be given to God for through him all things are made.

Author: Alex Bishop, Wesley Chapel UMC



April 9

**Scriptures For the Day:**

<b>Psalm</b>	<b>OT</b>	<b>Epistle</b>	<b>Gospel</b>
am: 24, 29 pm: 103	am: Zech 9:9-12 pm: Zech 12:9-13:9	1 Tim 6:12-16	Matt 21:12-17

**Reflecting on 1 Timothy 6:12-16 and Matthew 21:12-17**

1 Timothy 6:12—"Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in front of many witnesses."

Matthew 21: 13— [Jesus] said to them. "My house will be called a house of prayer, but you are making it a den of robbers."

I have often heard people say that Jesus is love. We focus on the softer side, the loving, gentle, merciful, forgiving side of Christ. The Christ that comforts us in times of sorrow. Christ is all of those things, He is most definitely my comfort in times of despair. He is my safe place that I can rest. He knows my heart and my mind, I can be my true and total self in His presence knowing that He loves me unconditionally.

We must not neglect that scripture tells us Christ is also strong! Matthew 21:12-13 shows us how Jesus reacted when he saw people turning the temple courts into a "den of robbers". He overthrew tables and drove out the buyers and sellers. This is no meek, docile person. He stood firm on the Scripture, did not back down and held people accountable for their actions.

I used to avoid confrontation even when I knew I was in the right. I didn't like the discomfort that came from disagreeing with someone. Jesus sets the example of the balance between loving our neighbor and holding one another accountable. He is love and mercy but He is also strength and righteousness. As we strive to always learn, grow and become closer to our creator, let us not forget that same balance in our lives. Let us love one another and through that love help each other stay on the righteous path by also saying, "Fight the good fight of faith" Timothy 6:12.

Let's hold one another accountable.

Author: Kathy Gull, FaithPoint



**April 10**

**Scriptures For the Day:**

<b>Psalm</b>	<b>OT</b>	<b>Epistle</b>	<b>Gospel</b>
am: 51 pm: 69:1-23	Jer 12:1-16	Phil 3:1-14	John 12:9-19

**Reflecting on John 12:9-19**

This scripture spoke to me about the works of God and how people wanted to see a miracle happen in front of them instead of believing and not seeing. As Christians today, we constantly struggle with the question, “Is God real; is he even worth believing in to begin with?”

The answer to that is found within this passage since the chief priest wanted to kill Lazarus, not because of fearing what had happened, but because Jesus gave faith to those people. He created hope and the chief priest wanted to instill fear in the people and did not want to give up his position of control.

To answer the questions above, yes, we as a follower of Jesus should believe in Him even if we have not seen a miracle. It is better to have hope and faith in Christ than to have fear in our hearts, turning away from God, leading an unrepentant life.

Do you need to see a miracle to believe in Christ our Lord?

**Author: Jade Ruggieri, Flint Hill UMC**



**April 11**

**Scriptures For the Day:**

<b>Psalm</b>	<b>OT</b>	<b>Epistle</b>	<b>Gospel</b>
am: 6 pm: 94	Jer 15:10-21	Phil 3:15-21	John 12:20-26

**Reflecting on John 12: 20 - 26**

This passage reminds me of plants and family. In the fall, plants die but because of the seeds they leave, we enjoy more plants in the spring. We enjoy beautiful flowers in the spring. The flowers die but because of the seeds that they leave, many more flowers will bloom.

To me, this is also true when we experience the death of a family member. The experience of the physical death is hard. We have to remind ourselves of the seeds that this family member left. Because of these seeds, the legacy of the family continues to grow. We have special memories that can be remembered and cherished for years to come.

Jesus tells us the same thing. If we love our life and follow Him, we must experience this physical death in order to spend eternity with Him.

It is truly amazing to me how one single seed can produce many seeds.

How many “seeds” in your lifetime will you produce?

**Author: Jeannie Fry, Wesley Chapel UMC**



April 12

**Scriptures For the Day:**

<b>Psalm</b>	<b>OT</b>	<b>Epistle</b>	<b>Gospel</b>
am: 55 pm: 74	Jer 17:5-10, 14-17	Phil 4:1-13	John 12:27-36

**Reflecting on Philippians 4:1-13**

Philippians 4 is by far one of my favorite chapters. But going deeper into it, these specific verses have always stuck out to me. Here's how I put it into perspective:

Life, along with many other good things, brings hardships. There will be plenty of times when you're lied to, cheated, mocked, any many more. The meaning of these verses speak loudly to make a statement. That through all these things, "...keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus".

In addition to keeping Christ in your heart through the deprivations of life, "Rejoice in the Lord always." To me, no matter what you're doing in your life, it is always important to keep God in your mind and heart.

There are many ways to do this. Whether that means going to church, participating in church camp, or talking to your friends about how you keep God close to your heart. "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound"

With God, every day you have the connection with Him is another day that you learn. He is our teacher, our mentor and our rock. Learning how to treat others is a very important lesson that God teaches us. Learning how to be humble, kind and loving is crucial to our humanity.

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" With Christ, all things are possible. Working through everyday struggles, life struggles --big or small -- Christ works through all of us to get through them. Christ is there for the good along with the bad.

This is very important for every follower of God to remember. That is why this verse sticks out to me and I think it's very important to remember.

Author: Caroline Sanford, Urbana High School Fellowship of Christian Athletes  
& Camp Manidokan Summer staff



**Scriptures For the Day:**

<b>Psalm</b>	<b>OT</b>	<b>Epistle</b>	<b>Gospel</b>
am: 102 pm: 142, 143	Jer 20:7-11	1 Cor 10:14-17, 11:27-32	John 17

**Reflecting on John 17**

As Jesus prepared for his last days on earth, He turned to God to pray for his disciples. Jesus knew that they were special. God had placed them in his path. God had “given” them to Jesus for a season to prepare them for what they would do next.

My husband, Jim, and I have been youth leaders for over 20 years. We have journeyed with youth through all phases-- awkward, curious, and rebellious. We watched them change and grow, learn and experiment. These youth were “given” to us. God entrusted them to us for a time. And yet, they were His. We prayed with them and for them, over them and about them. We still do. We are truly thankful for the time we shared with them and the way each one impacted and changed us.

Who are the important people that God has entrusted to you? May you constantly remember to pray for them and thank God for giving them to you, for they are His.

Author: Kathy Harrington, FaithPoint Online



April 14

Scriptures For the Day:

Psalm	OT	Epistle	Gospel
am: 95, 22 pm: 40, 54	Gen 22:1-14	1 Pet 1:10-20	am: Jn 13:36-38 pm: Jn 19:38-42

**Reflecting on Psalm 22**

"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Of course I know this verse. It is one of Christ's last words on the cross. To find it in a psalm from so long ago was a much needed reminder that the world has always gone through dark times and felt abandoned by God.

There is so much pain, strife, and chaos in the world today. It feels as if we live in extraordinarily dark times. How can we not be "poured out like water" with the fear of terrorism? How can we not feel our bones, our lives, our very beings "out of joint" when we witness the violence stemming from hatred and prejudice? How can our hearts not melt like wax for the refugees, the lost, and the homeless?

We too cry out to God.

And yet, we are reminded that even in our darkest hours, it is God who has dominion over all the world. We are not abandoned. God is with us from birth, to death, and beyond. God hears our cries and saves us.

Author: Anne Fix, Living Grace Lutheran Church





**Scriptures For the Day:**

<b>Psalm</b>	<b>OT</b>	<b>Epistle</b>	<b>Gospel</b>
am: 95, 88 pm 27	Job 19:21-27a	am: Heb 4:1-16 pm: Rom 8:1-11	-

**Reflecting on Romans 8:1-11**

As I reflect on this passage, I am reminded of my life before I came to truly accept Christ as my Lord and Savior. Like so many people, I believed that I was on the right path, I attended church weekly, tithed a large amount every Sunday believing that I stood out as a pillar of my community and church.

However, I was deceiving everyone around me including myself. God knew my inner heart and of my deception and through his Spirit, He convicted me. As this scripture states, "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not have Christ...The mind of a sinful man is death but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace."

I was living in the shadow of life – dead and not aware of it – not experiencing the vast possibilities found in Christ Jesus. Through the Spirit of Christ Jesus, I was given the opportunity to again have life. I found I was no longer tied to the natural desires of wealth and earthly possessions. That yoke was removed when I decided to open my heart and allow the Spirit to enter. Indeed, a new life and peace was given to me that will always be with me just as my Savior will always be with me.

Are you searching for meaning and peace in your life?

If so, open your heart to the one who raised Christ from the dead – the one that will also give life to your mortal body through his Spirit.

Author: Pastor Bob Ruggieri, Ijamsville/Flint Hill Charge



**April 16**

**Scriptures For the Day:**

<b>Psalm</b>	<b>OT</b>	<b>Epistle</b>	<b>Gospel</b>
am: 95, 88 pm 27	Job 19:21-27a	am: Heb 4:1-16 pm: Rom 8:1-11	-

**Reflecting on John 20:1-18 and Zechariah 9:12-17**

The first Easter was a walk tomb-ward. Filled with grief. Bound by heartache. Broken by darkness. Everything Mary knew, everything Mary believed, everything Mary trusted in...was gone. The first Easter begins with a walk tomb-ward.

We have all walked tomb-ward. Bound. Broken. Greif filled.

We have all felt like Mary, lost. Empty. Alone.

The prophet Zechariah calls those of us who follow Christ "Prisoners of Hope."

My family is living this phrase as we navigate a complicated and battering adoption process. We are working hard to bring our son home from Haiti – but it feels like every step forward means ten steps back. We are two years in, battered by our agency, dealing with layers and uncertainty, and still no child.

Just the other night, I cradled our 4 year old as she whispered, "Will I ever get to meet my brother?" The silence was overwhelming. Deep. Dark. Tomb-ward. And yet, I had to – my spirit had to – say, "Yes, sweet girl. Yes, of course. You will meet your bother."

Why? Because I am a Prisoner of Hope. Because I know the life I have in Jesus, I am a Prisoner of Hope – hemmed in, bound, held together by the Truth of the Resurrection.

The morning that begins with a walk tomb-ward is quickly transformed as Mary is the first to experience the Resurrected Lord. The tomb-ward journey becomes a testimony of Hope. Of Joy. Of Resurrection.

The worst thing, is never the last thing. We might be walking tomb-ward... but friends, that is a journey of Hope.

Author: Pastor Katie Bishop, New Hope UMC

## The Journey Continues

Thank you for taking this journey with us during this season of Lent.

The seasons may change, but the journey doesn't end here. If you are looking for a church home, any one of the Common Table Partners would be proud to have you participate in the life of the community with them.

We would encourage you to please reach out and make a connection so that we may continue to grow together.

### **Araby UMC**

Pastor TJ Mount  
Mount79@gmail.com  
(301) 694-8772  
4548 Araby Church Rd  
Frederick MD 21704  
Sunday Worship 10:30am

### **FaithPoint**

Pastor Chris Bishop  
pastor@faithpointum.org  
(301) 363-8165  
Urbana Middle School Ijamsville, MD  
Saturday worship 7pm online.faithpointum.org  
Sunday Worship 10am at Urbana Middle

### **Flint Hill UMC**

Pastor Bob Ruggieri  
goldstar.select.llc@gmail.com  
(301) 874-0890  
2732 Park Mills Rd  
Adamstown MD 21710  
Sunday Worship 11am

### **Ijamsville UMC**

Pastor Bob Ruggieri  
goldstar.select.llc@gmail.com  
(443) 994-9505  
4746 Mussetter Rd  
Ijamsville MD 21754  
Sunday Worship 9:30am

### **Living Grace Lutheran**

Pastor Tim Jahn  
LivingGraceLC@gmail.com  
(240) 285-9758  
Urbana High School Ijamsville, MD  
Sunday Worship 8am and 10am at Urbana High

### **Mountain View UMC**

Pastor Myungha Baek  
pastormhbaek@gmail.com  
(301) 253-2264  
11501 Mountain View Rd  
Damascus, Maryland  
Sunday Worship 9:30am

### **Pleasant Grove UMC**

Pastor Myungha Baek  
pastormhbaek@gmail.com  
(301) 865-5443  
3425 Green Valley Rd  
Ijamsville, MD 21754  
Sunday Worship 11:00am

### **Wesley Chapel**

Pastor Sandi Phillips  
Eph5v17@gmail.com  
(301) 663-4956  
3519 Urbana Pike  
Frederick, MD 21704  
Sunday Worship 10:30am



**COMMON TABLE**  
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