

This year our theme throughout Lent is, “*The Christ Café.*” Throughout our soup suppers and mid-week services we will talk about and consider the issues of hunger and what that means for each of us personally and globally. We all hunger for something; love, hope, direction, God, answers, guidance... etc. What do you hunger for? What is it most in this world that gnaws at your gut and makes you hungry for more?

This Lenten devotional may fill part of what you hunger for. It is truly a wonderful witness to the faith of a community that has been called, strengthened and fed by a God who never leaves us hungry. It is full of the love of God and the presence of the Holy Spirit. I pray it will be a menu for you throughout these forty days. I pray it will fill your empty places and make you full with the love of Christ.

To all the members and friends of LCR who took the time to write their reflections on each reading thank you. By allowing the Holy Spirit to work through you we have all been given a wonderful gift.

I invite you to set aside time everyday to read through the Scripture suggested for the day, read through your fellow sister or brother’s reflection on each reading, and then take a few moments to breathe deeply for you are truly in the presence of the Holy.

I pray this devotional serves as a companion for you on your Lenten journey. May it bring you strength, hope, comfort, and the reminder that we join together as one community... on one journey... praying and reflecting on God’s Word.

Peace,
Pastor Colleen Cox



February 6 – Ash Wednesday – Romans 5: 12-19

Ash Wednesday, what a downer! Just when we are starting to mellow out from the joy and celebration of the birth of Jesus, we get hit square in the face with this great big wet blanket- LENT. Come on, the days are finally getting longer, we have an occasional promise of spring with a warm day and now we encounter: self denial, ashes, penitential prayer and 40 long days. And, to add insult to injury we begin with a meditation on Paul’s Epistle to the Romans.

Hold on, Martin Luther said of Romans: “This letter is truly the most important piece in the New Testament. It is purest Gospel. It is well worth a Christian’s while not only to memorize it word for word, but also to occupy himself with it daily, as though it were the daily bread of the soul.” Perhaps I am not as effusive as Martin, but this passage of Romans explains why we have the great Joy of Easter morning.

Paul does the classic compare and contrast exposition. Simply put, death comes into the world by way of Adam and original sin. All people after Adam are in the bondage of original sin. For thousands of years after Adam the law had not been given and even after it was, people continued to be afflicted by sin. But, the gracious gift of Christ, from God, pays the debt of sin.

Because the Jewish community felt that they only had to obey the Law and they were justified with God, they placed all their belief in the power of the Law. Paul points out that the Law offers no remedy. When we are convicted of sin, we must turn to Jesus Christ for healing. Just as Adam was a representative of created humanity, so is Christ the representative of a new spiritual humanity.

That is why this passage in Romans sustains me throughout the dreary time of Lent. Because I know that on Easter Sunday, when the women come to the tomb and find that it is empty, the debt has been paid. That empty tomb is the proof of the resurrected Christ; it is the cancelled check to prove the debt has been paid. The sin is cancelled.

Clyde Beury

February 7 – Matthew 4: 1-11

My Temptation in the desert came in the form of Lung Cancer and the loss of my husband. Maybe not tempted by Satan with promises but just the same tempted. Tempted to withdraw, turn away, be alone and stay in a dark place, turning away from the love of children, grandchildren, church, family and friends. But because of God's love for me I am able to say Be Gone Satan, I choose to Worship The Lord My God.

May we all remember in times of adversity, darkness and despair how much God Loves Us... I did Here I Am Lord

Bonnie Sheppard

February 8 – Psalm 51: 1-17

The Psalm in today's reading is David's confession of sin and prayer for forgiveness after committing adultery with Bathsheba. The text contains the following words that are familiar to many of us as part of our Sunday services.

Verses 10-12: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Thy salvation and uphold me with Thy free spirit."

As we are just beginning our Lenten journey, a time for reflection, maybe this would be a good opportunity to look into our hearts and acknowledge our sinfulness... the things that keep us from being closer to God. Once we do this and are moved to ask for and receive forgiveness, we can then seek renewal. Through our renewal we are reminded of the many blessings we receive from God.

The verses that complete the text (vs.13-17) are less familiar, but are by no means less important. Their message to us is that after we have received healing, forgiveness and renewal, it doesn't end there. In response, we are to spread the good news of God's forgiveness, and we are to offer praise to Him as a reflection of our love.

Join me in prayer,

Dear God, Your forgiveness is one of the many blessings for which we are thankful. Help us to share the message of Your loving goodness with others.

Amen

Jane Helmis

February 9- 2 Corinthians 5: 20b-6:10

The last part of this passage has always spoken to me. I am amazed by the paradox of God's grace. *"We are treated as impostors, and yet are true, as unknown and yet well known; as dying and behold we live; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything."*

I find such comfort and power in that! No matter how other people define us, it cannot change the reality of who we really are in Christ Jesus. No matter what others do to us, it cannot change the reality of what God has already done for us in Christ Jesus. No matter how much pain and death we experience, it cannot change the reality that God has already promised us a new and abundant life. No one and no thing can take that life from us! It is secured through the death and resurrection of Christ. God always gets the last word, and God's last word for us and for all the world is LIFE. It reminds me of Cassie Bernall, martyred at Columbine. Although she stared down the barrel of a gun, she would not give up her hope and confidence that those two young men could not take from her what God had promised her in Christ. She said, "yes, I believe". *As dying and behold we live; as punished, and yet not killed....* Because Christ lives, we too shall live.

May the promises of God give you strength and comfort during Lenten days. Amen

God of Life, fill my heart with your love and your grace. Amen

Pastor Sharon Taylor

February 10, First Sunday in Lent – Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21



“Giving to the Needy”, “Fasting”

Chapter 6 begins with “Be careful not to do your ‘acts of righteousness’ before, men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.”

I think these readings make it clear that we should encompass all we do in the name of the Lord as part of our lives, it should be part of our nature, no bells or whistles needed, no thanks or acknowledgement, just God’s children doing the ‘right thing’ as God has taught us. But these readings also make it clear that we should be giving to the needy, fasting, not storing up treasures for ourselves on Earth. It’s not the material things in life that matter, it what we do with our material things, our talents, our time. Verse 21 is the verse LCR has based a stewardship campaign on – “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”. And whatever our treasure – we should share it gladly with all in God’s kingdom.

Sandy Mullican

February 11 – Genesis 12: 1-4a

The Lord said to Abram, leave your country, your family and your relatives and go to the land I will show you. I will bless you and make your descendants into a great nation...

Can you imagine being told to drop everything and leave? Could you do it? Is your faith strong enough to believe in God and pick up and leave all that you have and know?

As I sit here thinking about if I could do that, leave home and all that I have to follow God, I realize it takes someone of great faith and belief to do it. Then I start to think about the sermon that Pastor Colleen preached on 1/27/08. (Read it if you were not in church!) God is giving us this opportunity to follow him. Each day is the opportunity to do what He is telling us. If I don’t take this opportunity today, will he offer it again? I sure hope so. I want to say that my faith is that strong but like some others, I have times where I second guess my faith and myself. I want to do all God is telling me to do, but it might not always happen the way that God or I want or expect. I just hope and pray that God will give me the chance again to drop what I have and follow him like Abram and even the 12 disciples.

Dear Lord –

Please give us all the strength to drop what we have and follow you each and every day. Keep our faith strong in you and always give us the opportunity to do as you ask. Amen

Jenn Vajda

February 12 – Philippians 3:17-4:1

In today’s society who and what we are is defined by what job we have, what neighborhood we live in, what car we drive. We take pride in what we do and the friends that we have. This is not to say that these are not important. However, remember that your heart will be where your treasure is.

Let us turn our hearts toward Jesus and tell him that we treasure him most of all. For all is possible through him.

Cheryl Varga

February 13 – Psalm 121

This psalm, (a song of “ascent “used by the pilgrims in their journey to Jerusalem), reminds us that in our spiritual journey toward our heaven not to rely on earthly things but trust in God. When we encounter hills in our journey, who should we turn to except God, the Creator of the heaven and the earth. What comfort it is to know that our Creator also never turns his attention away from us. He is ever wakeful, never sleeps, and always watches us to make sure we don’t fall from our path. During the light of daily activities, He will provide refreshment and protection: a “shade” from the problems. During long cold nights, He is there as the moon to light our path. As Lord of Creation, He will preserve our souls from even the Evil One. The word “Lord” is the special “covenant” name for God, and our end of this covenant or agreement is to obey our Lord and be mindful to put our faith in Him alone. If we put our confidence in God in all our “comings and goings,” He will be with us now in prosperity and adversity from now until the end of time. What an astonishing wonderful God!

Gabriel Patay

February 14 – Romans 4: 1-5, 13-17

If I was looking for a single word to express what Paul is talking about in the Letter to the Church in Rome, that word would be ‘Righteousness’. And what a word righteousness is, literally it means being right with God- not a bad idea. When we read Romans and think about what Paul is saying, about how we all sin, but God has a plan for the salvation of all; how it is as simple as faith. It is easy to see why Martin Luther had such high regard for Romans and how it gave him the strength to withstand the powers of his day and reform the Church.

Luther came to understand that he had been saved through grace because of faith, not because of anything that he or any of us could do. Likewise, Paul is explaining that it was not anything that Abraham had done, but because of his faith that he was considered righteous by God. Abraham was one of the great patriarchs of the Jewish people, and for Paul to use him as an example of the power of faith must have been difficult for the Jewish listeners to accept. But Paul continues in his plodding systematic way to build his case. When I read Romans I feel as if I am back in high school and watching a geometry problem being solved, I keep waiting for Paul to exclaim, “Q.E.D.!”

The difficulty that I feel most people have when reading this section of Romans comes from our need to be in control and make the process difficult. This is the constant struggle between Law and Gospel. The Jews took the Ten Commandments and expanded them to over 600 laws in Deuteronomy and they kept a score as to who was the most righteous. But Paul tells us, “All are condemned by one transgression and justification of life for all results from one righteous act (the death and resurrection of Jesus) that grace might prevail through righteousness.” It is that easy.

Clyde Beury

February 15 – Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-19

The true meaning of Faith is hearing the word from God. It is trusting in the message heard and knowing that the road ahead may not be easy. By having confidence in your walk with God you have a peaceful feeling that things will be all right in the end.

Throughout the bible there are several stories about faithful servants that trusted in God's message.

Noah trusted God even though there was no sign of a flood. Noah obeyed and wasted no time in building the Ark and saved his family and because of his faith he became one of those whom God has accepted

Abraham trusted God when God told him to leave home and go far away to another land. Abraham obeyed even though he did not know where he was going. Even when he reached God's promise land, he lived in tents like a mere visitor. Abraham did this because he was confidently waiting for God to bring him to that strong heavenly city.

These men of Faith I have mentioned above heard the message. They knew that there was uncertainty in what was ahead, but obeyed the message anyway.

All it takes is hearing, acting and pleasing God. You cannot please God without Faith. Anyone who wants to come to God must believe that there is a God and that he rewards those who sincerely look for him.

Ronnie Gropper

February 16 – John 3: 1-17

Okay, how many times during the Superbowl or the playoffs did you see someone hold up a sign that read "John 3:16"? What annoys me no end is that the person who wants to remind us of the promise of 3:16 appears to forget the good news of the follow up verse, John 3:17. This passage from John's Gospel is Classic John; it begins with the discussion between Jesus and Nicodemus, continues into the contrast between spirit and flesh and finally perplexes the Pharisee with admonition, 'You must be born again'. By the time things get to the comparison of Moses and the serpent and the Son of Man being lifted up, I am certain that Nicodemus was wishing he had never come to see Jesus.

By the time John got around to writing his Gospel the new sect, Christians, had parted from the Jews. So it is not surprising that John has Jesus giving Nicodemus such a hard time. And I actually feel sorry for Nicodemus; because I believe he is truly trying to understand who Jesus is and what he is preaching. So as the drama unfolds and in verse 10 when Jesus begins with, "You are Israel's teacher," I can hear John making this phrase sound very sarcastic. Maybe by this time Jesus was tired of people coming to him in an attempt to trick him into saying something that could be used against him, maybe he had had a very tiring day and just did not want to deal with another Pharisee. Maybe he was just trying to test Nicodemus to determine his sincerity.

Whatever the reason, this short passage holds plenty for the Christian or the searching non-Christian to turn over in their mind and think about.

And so as we travel on our Lenten journey, let us think about who Jesus came to save, and what the nature of the Kingdom of God is. I believe Jesus is telling Nicodemus and all of us the Kingdom is personal, not national or ethnic. I find solace in knowing that born of the spirit and marked with the sign of the cross forever I will come into that Kingdom. But I am also fearful knowing that in baptism, I am baptized into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Clyde Beury

February 17 – Second Sunday in Lent – Mark 8: 31-38

This text does not represent the “warm and fuzzy Jesus”, who we prefer to read about. Where is the love, the peace, the grace? Instead, we have words like, suffer, rejected, killed, rebuked, deny, cross, lose, forfeit, ashamed. Our gentle Jesus seems to lose his patience, and even calls Peter ‘Satan’! Like a parent trying to explain a seemingly simple concept to a small child, Jesus must have been frustrated at times with the difficulty of his task here on Earth, and the challenge of getting people to grasp concepts that they could never fully understand.

I know I am like Peter in that sometimes instead of listening for God’s voice and really trying to make sense of where He is leading me, I am quicker to react, rebuke, and rebel against what I can’t understand. But Jesus goes on to say that to follow Him, you must deny yourself. Meaning, the time I spend questioning and arguing with God about His plan is hindering me from really being a follower. When He says, “Whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it,” I think He means that it is only in giving control of your physical, everyday life over to God that you are able to have true spiritual life and a relationship with Him.

But Jesus also realized how hard it is for us to do that. Having shared our human journey with us, He realizes what a constant challenge it is for us to surrender our perception of control. It is interesting that this scene begins with Jesus foreshadowing the resurrection – before He lays out the substantial challenge for the disciples; He has already given them the good news. No matter how much they struggle, He is trying to reassure them that He will make up for their shortcomings. And that is where we find the love, the peace, and the grace!

Becky Ehrenfeld

February 18 – Exodus 17: 1-4

In this passage Moses is leading his people through the desert. They come to a place where there is no water. The people get angry with Moses and demand he find water. They are beginning to question Moses asking why he would lead them out of Egypt where they at least had food and drink to a place where their children and livestock are dying of thirst. I would imagine that Moses himself must have been questioning his judgment at this point. It must have taken tremendous faith to continue to follow God’s direction when everything seemed so lost. I wonder how many of his followers died during the forty year journey. I wonder how many times a revolt

against Moses was planned. I wonder how many of us would have had the strength of faith to continue to lead under such circumstances.

This makes me think about the small challenges I am faced with in my own life. It can be easy to allow ourselves to become overwhelmed with our daily struggles. Whether it is a seemingly insurmountable issue such as illness, financial struggles, or domestic problems or several trivial issues that add up to become unbearable, I think it is a good idea to think about Moses. It turns out that God leads Moses to a rock and makes water flow from that rock. The problem was solved as soon as Moses asked for God's help. Let us always remember that we have our Lord to lean upon in times of trouble. Whether large or small, turn to God and tell him of your sorrows and difficulties. Then, step back, open your heart, and allow the hand of the Lord to set you on the right path. Our journey may not always be smooth and easy, but have faith that God knows where you need to go and how to lead you there. Amen

Marie Speers

February 19 – Exodus 17: 5-7



”Is the Lord really with us?” This question stood out to me as I read the 3 verses. For this is the question that the people ask to Moses on Mount Sinai thousands of years ago. It is the question that thousands of years later is still being asked. Is it not true though? For in the text we read that Moses named the place Massah meaning “testing” and Meribah which means “complaining.” At one point or another in our life, we are going to test God. We are going to ask ourselves, “Is the Lord really with us? Even more so we will ask, “Is the Lord really with me?”

I must admit, I have been one to say this before. I remember my mom telling me on the way home from stopping by my mom-mom's house that my Pop was going into hospice. For some reason, I could not take this in. I finally asked my mom, “So what does this mean?” She then explained to me that they had stopped all treatment and they didn't know how long it would be before he would pass. The first thing I remember doing was crying. I just couldn't believe that my Pop was stopping his treatment. I remember that night. I didn't want to talk to anyone. I just wanted to go to bed. I laid in my bed crying, thinking why would you do this, how could this be happening. I remember saying to God, “If you really were there Pop would be better and everything would be fine.” I myself had asked the question. I myself was testing God. I was “complaining” about my problems and how I felt. It was only 2 days later that he passed away. I remember that week being so long. Happy at times, and sad at others. I remember though one night, after the funeral, going to bed and saying my prayers. I remembered to tell Pop I missed him. I also remember thanking God, for all the good memories of him. I remember thanking him for taking the pain away from him. I remember thanking him for blessing me with an Amazing Pop.

Through all of this I learned that there are going to be times in our lives that we will complain to

God, and tell him how bad our life is, or how sad it is. There will be times that we will test God. And there will even be times where we ask the question, “Is the Lord really with us?” What we all must realize is at the end of the day, God is with us. He is always with us. When we are happy, he is with us. When we are sad, he is with us. When we sin, he is with us. When we lose someone we love, he is with us. When a new baby is born, he is with us. No matter the time or the place God is with us. He is in our hearts and our souls. God is with us ALWAYS!

Nicole May

February 20 – Psalm 95

*Come, let's shout praises to God, raise the roof for the Rock who saved us!
Let's march into his presence singing praises,
lifting the rafters with our hymns!*

As the director of the Capital Campaign “raising the roof” and “lifting the rafters” is what I have been working towards, as has our entire congregation through generous contributions. We all are called to praise our Rock with our hymns in joyful worship.

But this is Lent, and the second half of this Psalm is not so joyful. God speaks:

For forty years they watched me at work among them,
as over and over they tried my patience.
And I was provoked—oh, was I provoked!
'Can't they keep their minds on God for five minutes?
Do they simply refuse to walk down my road?'

We are reminded that this is a long term relationship from which we may stray. But we are called to keep covenant with God to drop everything and listen, listen as he speaks. If we listen for God and to God we can stay on his road and raise the roof.

Barbara Spencer

February 21 – Romans 5: 1-11

The LCR Saturday Morning Men's Group spent weeks culling through the gems found in Romans. The beauty and depth of the book of Romans is crystallized in these passages by Paul. Typical, Pharisee-trained, lawyer, and articulate debater Paul, here lays out in typical logical sequence the 'ifs', the 'thens', and yes, the 'buts' of the COST of the CROSS. We can almost see the flow chart of his case as he layers suffering, perseverance, character, hope, and our faithful response to sing praises for the unfathomable love and gentle grace displayed in such a horrific sacrifice. It is this sacrifice that we can barely grasp in our limited understanding with its breadth of meaning.

For me, the meditation here is not dwelling on the undeserving nature of this grace, but for the timing and finality of it all. By this I mean how much I seem caught up half-crying, half-laughing and smiling at the plan... God really wants us in relationship with him, and when we

think we're letting him in – surprise - he's already there waiting for us! Christ arrives right on time to make this happen. He didn't, and doesn't wait for us to get ready. If I had to 'get ready' I'd never reach him... I'm far too weak and rebellious to really get ready for him. Thank you, Lord for putting an end to any questions about your desire for intimate friendship with me through your consummate blood sacrifice. During this Lenten season and beyond, help me to respond and say boldly "My Lord, My Savior, My Jesus".

Frank Ehrenfeld III

February 22 – Luke 13: 6-9

We pray and talk to Jesus, and sometimes we feel we never get an answer. So we pray and ask again, and still no answer. Like the man that owned the vineyard, we are looking and listening and no fruit is received, so we decide to cut down or cut off our branches that reach out to Jesus. The servant was very wise. Start a new conversation with Jesus. Refresh (fertilize) your thoughts. Be still and listen. The answer may not come in the way you want or expect, but oh what a wonderful new fruit you will bear.

Cheryl Varga

February 23 – John 4: 5-26



In the story of Jesus talking to a Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, he was telling her about a wonderful gift that God has for her. The gift was living water. He explained that when people drink the water out of the well they are always thirsty again and again. After drinking this living water it becomes a perpetual spring within, watering you forever with eternal life.

The woman was so excited about hearing this news of never wanting to be thirsty again that she could not wait and begged him to have some of this water. Jesus then went on and told her everything that she ever did.

The woman had been amazed and figured that he must have been some prophet. She then went to the village and told everyone that they must meet this man that must be the Messiah. The village came streaming to meet him.

Just think of how exciting it is every time you take communion. It is this very idea of being always filled with eternal life.

Ronnie Gropper

February 24 – Third Sunday in Lent – John 4: 27-42

There were 5 days left until the deadline. I had been patiently waiting for my message from the Holy Spirit to no avail. Perhaps I misunderstood what Pastor Colleen had said. I guessed I was on my own. I re-read John 4:27-42. I decided to sleep on it. Tomorrow, I promised myself, would be the day I'd buckle down and get my Lenten devotion written.

The mail came this morning while we were having breakfast, and there it was. There was my message. The Holy Spirit can be sneaky sometimes!

I had been associating the passage I had chosen with food because in it, Jesus tells his disciples that he has food to eat that they know nothing about. He goes on to say that his food is to "obey the will of Him who sent me and finish the work He sent me to do."

The index in my late father-in-law's beloved old Teacher's Bible defines John 4:32 this way: "If we would be like Christ we must do His will and accomplish the work He appoints."

All this time I'd been trying to make the connection between food and doing Christ's will and the discussion Jesus goes on to have with his disciples about the harvest.

Well, there it was in the mail – my newsletter from Aid To Friends. In addition to the usual appeals for volunteers and food for the shut-ins, the newsletter asked for soup during the winter months. How simple it will be to make some extra soup! Soup is our favorite meal in winter or summer. There was my connection. How many other opportunities did I miss while I waited for the Holy Spirit to tap me on the shoulder with a list?

That's what Jesus was telling his disciples. The fields are ripe for harvest. Someone else has done the sowing and the reaping is ready to be done all around you.

Every day in so many ways the Lord's harvest is waiting. We only need to get busy and act on our opportunities.

Catherine Plummer

February 25 – 1 Samuel 16: 1-5

During the Lenten season we are called to examine how obedient we are to God in Jesus Christ. It is not always easy as we need to take ourselves out of the driver's seat. Our obedience is a response to what God has done for us already in Jesus Christ.

In this lesson from I Samuel we find Samuel being called by God to go and anoint the new king. God had rejected Saul as king and God knew who the next king would be. Samuel's role was to anoint the new king, which would be David.

Samuel heard God, but was thinking through his human mind and was procrastinating about following out God's wishes. He was afraid Saul would come after him and kill him. God had an

answer- to take a heifer and tell the elders that he has come to sacrifice it to the Lord. He consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

When the Lord wants us to do something, it may not be something we can get our human minds around. Obedience means sacrifice in many different ways. In this case when Samuel sacrificed his fear, he was able to step forth in faith and be obedient.

Fear is one of the most common excuses we have of not being obedient. Maybe we have to ask ourselves, ‘who is more important in the scheme of things?’ Has the Lord ever let us down? It is ironic that the Lord gave us minds to think and reason, but we often jump to what others would think and that is what most often gets in the way.

Prayer: Lord God, we are sorry that we find it so hard to be obedient. Help us to turn our fears over to you that they do not get in the way of being obedient to you. During this Lenten season help us to examine our obedience to you. In Jesus name, Amen.

Rev. Bruce J. Thorsen

February 26 – John 9: 1-41

“One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!”

Jesus grants sight to the man born blind, and the blind man himself asks nothing of the Lord and does nothing to merit Jesus’ notice and intervention. The blind man gains his sight, finds faith, and proclaims, “Lord, I believe.” Yet, in a further note of irony or paradox, those in authority remain blind to the marvel of God’s grace at work in their midst—even when it is literally staring them in the face. They repeatedly question and cross-examine the man born blind and his family, skeptical that one such as he should have found God’s favor. It becomes clear that those who claim to be “in the know” are left in the dark. They do not get it. Once again, because of God’s power and loving-kindness, the world as we know it is turned upside down.

It is all too easy to remain blind to the reality of God at work in our world today. It is easy to turn aside our glance when confronted by the stranger and the homeless person. It is tempting to believe the world as it is must be the world as it was meant to be. But the Word of the Lord still has the power to change everything. The story of God’s love for God’s people is not over. We are as much a part of that story as was the man born blind. Our eyes were opened to spiritual reality in the waters of our baptism. There we were anointed for greater things.

We may be tempted to think that we do not matter—that what we do is of little account. Most of us quietly go about our lives, not realizing the abundant favor God has bestowed upon us. Who we are does matter. For we are all agents of the Lord’s transforming Word in our communities, in our families, and in our church. The Lord looks upon each of us today, and proclaims again, “This is the one.” You and I are the ones. And in faith, we can only respond, as did the man born blind, “Lord, I believe.”

Pastor Colleen Cox

February 27 – 1 Samuel 16: 6-13

How does God choose people for service in the world? Is it by their physical capabilities? Or does it depend on their intelligence or appearance? Maybe it has something to do with who they know, or how much money they have? Of course, none of those attributes has anything to do with God's choices.

In this passage, Samuel is sent by God to Bethlehem to anoint one of the sons of Jesse as the new king of Israel. When he arrives with olive oil in hand, Samuel meets Jesse and his seven sons, and he immediately thinks the first son is the chosen one. However, God's reply lets him know that the choice is not that easy! God tells Samuel that he does not judge a person by "how tall or handsome he is," as man might judge someone. Rather, God says, "I look at the heart." On that day, God did not choose any of the seven sons who arrived with Jesse, but Samuel sent for David, the youngest son, who was a shepherd taking care of his sheep. God anointed David as the next king of Israel, and the rest is history....

From this passage, we can learn that God is not looking for the handsomest or strongest or smartest person, or the one with the most riches to do his service. He wants someone with a heart for service. He wants someone who cares about other people and is willing to give their time and skill and money to make small or large changes in the world. Are we ready to be chosen by God?

Elaine Zimmerman

February 28 – Ephesians 5: 8-14

*Figure out what will please Christ, and then do it. Make the most of every chance you get.
These are desperate times!*

Paul wrote in desperate times... he thought the end was near... and we should live as though it is. But these words made me think of the *Be the Change Foundation* founded by members of our congregation. They know that some people are truly desperate at this time and have taken action. Certainly this is what pleases Christ.

I also think of the Youth led Hip-Hop Worship, this event was special enough to see young people working together and in joyful worship. But we are called to make the most of every chance. Disciples with Special Needs were invited. Two young men were dropped off part way through the worship. They were quickly included and invited to bring their joyful enthusiasm, to this worship time. As we "sprinkled sunshine" on each other I could feel Christ smiling.

Barbara Spencer

February 29 – Psalm 23: 1-4

*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want
He makes me lie down in green pastures
He leads me beside the beside the still waters
He restores my soul*

*He leads me in the paths of righteousness
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for thou art with me.
Thy Rod and thy staff comfort me.*

The first part of Psalm 23 to me is a very big comfort. To know that the Lord is watching over me and I have everything that I need. He lies me down in the beauty of the earth in green pastures beside still waters. He restores my soul with the Blood and Bread of communion. He always keeps me on the right path, even though I may stray. I walk though the Valley of the shadow of death with no fear, because He is with me all the way. His Rod and Staff comforts me like when Moses lead the people out of Egypt.

HOW MUCH BETTER CAN IT BE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Ronnie Gropper

March 1 – Psalm 23: 5-6

A few years ago the Men's Group here at LCR spent many Saturday mornings studying the 23rd Psalm using the book, *God Help me Through Today*, by Bob Lively. These final two verses of the Psalm were covered in two chapters and contained 51 pages. After several weeks of study there was not a man in the group who was happy as we concluded our study. I cannot begin to capture the depth of feelings shared and confidences require that I not talk about some of the unburdening that came out of those Saturday mornings. But what I will share are a few of my thoughts on the last two verses of David's Psalm of trust and confidence in God and his images of the Good Shepherd.

Who among us would host a party and set our guests in the middle of a conflict? But what I sense in the opening is that even if we are surrounded by our enemies we can relax, sit down and enjoy a meal. Just the level of adrenalin to prepare for a battle would prevent us from being able to enjoy the food. But David makes us feel that if we trust in God no matter what is going on around us, we will enjoy the hospitality. Not only that, it will be like an awards banquet and you are the guest of honor. Again, it would be hard to calmly have your head anointed with oil when an enemy wants to cut it off for a trophy, but the Good Shepherd will keep you safe.

The closing lines of this Psalm are an incredible source of comfort. Life is filled with ups and downs, as a friend of mine was fond of remarking, "Sometimes you get the elevator, sometimes you get the shaft." David reminds us that no matter how unpredictable our lives, no matter how uncertain our day to day existence, the Shepherd assures us that a place is set aside for us and we will dwell in that house forever.

To be safe when surrounded by our enemies, even to the point of sitting down and eating. To have the assurance of goodness and mercy following us all our lives and having the safety of the heavenly home, this is the promise of the Good Shepherd! And that is a very good thought to carry with us during our Lenten Journey.

Clyde Beury

March 2- Fourth Sunday in Lent – John 9: 35-41

To understand the full meaning of these verses, it is important to read the beginning of Chapter 9 to learn some of the background of Jesus' healing of the blind man. So many things bothered the Pharisees concerning this healing. Who was this Jesus? Where did he come from? They were skeptical of his ability to heal and even called Jesus a sinner because he healed on the Sabbath. Meanwhile, while the Pharisees were having debates and committee meetings concerning Jesus, people were being healed by him and lives were being changed. The blind man didn't need to know the whys and wherefores of how he had been healed. What he did know was that he was miraculously healed, his life was changed, and he wanted to share this with others. The longer he experienced this new life through Christ, the more confident he became in the one who had healed him. The Pharisees, on the other hand, wanted to know all the whys and wherefores and do's and don'ts rather than opening themselves up to the miracle that had just happened. Sometimes we, like the Pharisees, become so complacent and self-satisfied as we strive to keep all the rules and seek to understand the theology of what and why we believe, that we become spiritually blind to the simple truth of the miracle of Jesus. In order to believe and share Christ with others, we don't have to have all the answers. We simply need to open our lives to Him and trust that God will use us in some way to share His message.

Betty Berner

March 3 – Ezekiel 37: 1-3

Of the 245 Old Testament quotations that appear in the Book of Revelation, 37 come from Ezekiel. And of the stories and visions that appear in Ezekiel, probably none is more familiar than the Valley of the dry bones. But what does a story of Israel in Captivity written nearly 2600 years ago have for us, today?

For me, the answer that Ezekiel makes at the end of verse three, "O Sovereign Lord, you alone know" is what the story is all about. When God asking for the seemingly impossible requires an answer of us, the only answer can be, "Lord, you alone know." And to place our trust in the Lord is the first step in accomplishing what is asked of us. It is placing our faith in God that he has given us the resources for any task he gives us. For, without faith there can be no hope of completing the task.

This is what the people of Israel faced while captive in Babylon. They were a nation divided and conquered by the Babylonians. Their Temple had been destroyed and their nation led away in chains. It is no coincidence that Lamentations comes directly before Ezekiel. The people have had their time to mourn and now it is time for the return of hope. Hope that Israel will be restored and the Temple rebuilt. But before any of this restoration takes place, there must be a restoration of faith and the hope that comes from faith. Ezekiel's vision of a valley of dry bones brought back to life is the opening line of a message of the power of faith and hope in God.

So, whatever the crisis, need or problem, we need to remember while seeking a solution that, "O Sovereign Lord, you alone know!"

Clyde Beury

March 4 – Ezekiel 37: 4-14

At first glance, dry bones are not particularly inspiring, but as I continued to read this passage it had an emotional impact on me. The power of God's words can have a tremendous effect on people! He resurrected the dry bones of the people of Israel and made them whole again, even after they had disobeyed Him. He gave them a second chance.

That message is powerful. How often do we need a second chance at getting things right? On several occasions I have said or done something that I desperately wish I could take back or "do over." Usually, if I am quiet and think or pray about it, God will give me an opportunity to make a change. Whether it is saying, "I'm sorry," or explaining my actions and trying to change my response the next time I find my self in that situation, God shows me a different way. Then, it is up to me to do what is right.

The other message of this passage is to share with other people what we know God can do for us. God brought Ezekiel to the valley of dry bones to tell them to listen to Him, and He would give them new life. Do you know someone who could use some encouragement or help that might "bring them back to life?" Maybe you could bring them to worship here at LCR or invite them to one of the many opportunities for fellowship—such as a Soup Supper or other special event. Don't miss the second chance that God gives to you, or the possibility that you could lift someone's spirits by sharing what you know to be true.

Elaine Zimmerman

March 5 – Psalm 130

This Psalm starts out as such a painful cry for God to hear – and who among us has not felt like this throughout our lives? We know we have sinned. Each of us, in our deep secret heart, knows what our personal sins are. It is not for us to hold our sins up against our neighbors. It is not for us to measure and judge. It is only for us to know that we have a God who knows our sins and loves us and forgives us. We are the children of a God who gives us another chance each and every new day. What a comfort that gives. God loves us and forgives us and redeems our sins.

God gives us the strength to begin each new day, each new hour, and each new minute and do the next right thing. And if we slip, God is there to catch us and help us get back on the path.

God journeys with us as we travel this long road called life and that knowledge brings a comfort nothing can surpass.

Watch for God ----- Listen for God ---- God is there and God's love is unfailing and full of redemption.

Diane Casey

March 6 – Romans 8: 6-8

Those who let themselves be controlled by their old sinful lives only please themselves and lead to death. The old sinful nature within us is against God. That's why those who are still under the control of their old sinful lives can never please God.

Those who follow the Holy Spirit find themselves doing those things that please God. This leads to life and peace.

What is your Choice???

Ronnie Gropper

March 7 – Romans 8: 9-11

You are no longer ruled by your desires, but by God's Spirit, who lives in you. People who don't have the Spirit of Christ in them don't belong to him. But Christ lives in you. So you are alive because God has accepted you, even though your bodies must die because of your sins. Yet God raised Jesus to life! God's Spirit now lives in you and he will raise you to life by his Spirit.

I grew up thinking that the Spirit of God was always like the wind and the air we breathe. For a youngster that was the easiest way to put it sometimes. But I know now that it can be true but also the Spirit of God is the way we live, act and treat others. It's not just that each breath I take is the Spirit of God flowing through me, it is how I live each day and how I care for others. So when I feel that I am having trouble, it is because I am not letting God help and guide me. I am trying to let my desires and wants get in the way of God's plan for me. But what does God have planned for us – well only He knows, so we need to let the Spirit flow within us to do as He planned.

Dear God –

Let your Spirit flow within all of us and give us all the strength to do your will. Show us your way to do what you have planned for us. Keep us all safe in your Spirit, Lord. Amen

Jenn Vajda

March 8 – John 11: 1-27



Martha, Mary and Lazarus were friends of Jesus. When Lazarus became ill, Mary and Martha sent word to Jesus because they knew He loved Lazarus. They didn't place any demands on Him. They trusted that He would take care of them. Knowing how Jesus felt about His friends, it always strikes me to read, "When He heard he was sick, He stayed two more days where He was." Mary and Martha must have been similarly disappointed. Mary did not even come to greet

Jesus when He finally arrived four days after Lazarus died. Instead, she stayed with the women and Jews who had come to offer comfort. Martha went to Jesus, but displayed her disappointment in her words “If You had been here, my brother would not have died.”

We also are friends of Jesus, and I think that when we pour out our hearts to Him, trusting in His love, we also have an expectation of what Jesus should do for us. If our prayers are not met immediately in the way we expect, we sometimes become disappointed. There is a temptation to give up on Jesus and seek comfort in this world as Mary took comfort from the women and Jews. We have been fortunate to know God’s love, but we believe we understand more than we do. We believe we know how our prayers should be answered. If it doesn’t happen the way we planned it, we don’t necessarily turn away from God, but we feel disappointed. Jesus says to Martha, “Your brother will rise again.” Martha hoped Jesus would prevent him from dying, so she was already disappointed. She demonstrated her knowledge of Jesus’ word by responding, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection.” Since it wasn’t happening the way she expected, she graciously gave up and figured maybe Jesus had something else in mind. For Jesus, in His human aspect, how frustrating that must have been, and how we must frustrate Him still with our love but limited faith. He’s thinking rising from the dead, and she hoped for the ancient equivalent of penicillin!

I struggle to remain open to God’s answer to my prayers, which might not be in the form I expect. I challenge myself to give up efforts to control difficulties in my life and allow Him to show me His way. I remind myself that when the world around me and people I come across seem to meet my needs, it is only through God’s hand.

Fran Kane

March 9 – Fifth Sunday in Lent – John 11: 28-45

It may be hard to put the story of the raising of Lazarus into proper perspective during this Lenten season. It seems such a short time ago in our scriptural journey that Jesus was doing his best to avoid the spotlight. Even after his Mother bids him intercede at the wedding at Cana, he responds that his time (the cross) has not yet come. Here at Bethany some years later into his ministry, he knows that his time is fast approaching. How ironic that in giving life to Lazarus, this miracle starts into motion his eventual death: because of its proximity to Jerusalem, the swelling of his movement thirsting for signs of his connection to God, and the jealous Sanhedrin looking for additional excuses to persecute him.

There are elements of this story that have confused and fascinated me. Confusing are the crowds pushing Jesus into action, his sympathy, his anger, and finally the message that this miracle sends. At the same time, fascinating are his actions, his sympathy, his anger, and yep, the message.

Jesus seems to have so much sympathy with the mourners that he cries. Indeed, verse 35 is known as the shortest verse in the Bible: “Jesus wept.” But this short passage among John’s otherwise image-filled prose underscores our Lord’s intense humanness while revealing his divine nature. His tears are not for the passing of Lazarus, but for the sadness created by his friend’s death. His temper seems to flare as he expresses impatience with those who taunt him.

Using his own curriculum vitae of miracles to get his attention they press for action. His action meets his anger... not because of the crowds teasing, but anger at death itself. Perhaps he is also angry at the crowd, for their once again wanting tangible “seeing is believing” evidence of his divinity.

I have had two friends experience death in the past few months. There has been sympathy and anger at loss and tragedy. Yet, what message can I send to my friends who grieve? My proselytizing won't bring back their loved ones. Neither will my works, or words, nor faithful proclamations. This story reminds me that in the raising of Lazarus, God is the only one who brings life from death out of his love for those in such need. This is the heart of the Gospel. God's glory is seen in his victory over death – indeed, it is possible only through death – first the death of Lazarus and then the death of Jesus himself. Lord, I have not seen someone raised from the dead – help my sight that I too may claim your victory without having to see.

Frank Ehrenfeld III

March 10 – Matthew 21: 1-11

Jesus and the disciples are drawing close to Jerusalem for that final entry. Jesus sends two disciples ahead of them into a village and gives them some very specific instructions.

Vs. 2 “go into the village over there, he said, “and you will see a donkey tied there, with its colt beside it. Untie them and bring them here.”

vs 3 “If anyone asks what you are doing, just say, “The Lord needs them,” and he will immediately send them.” (life application study Bible)

Wow I thought, they were never directed to ask permission to take the donkeys. Isn't it stealing, if you take something that belongs to someone else and don't get their permission first?”

Maybe this can be a reminder to us of who is the ultimate owner of all things.

Marian Robey

March 11 – Psalm 118: 1-2, 19-29

This reading is a Psalm of praise. Verse 1 and verse 29 both say this: “*Give thanks to the Lord, because he is good, and his love is eternal.*” To me this means that God will always love us no matter if we deserve it or not, and that we need to always thank God because of what he has done for us.

Kara Mullican

March 12 – Isaiah 50: 4-9a

This is one of the four Servant Songs found in the book of Isaiah. These songs describe how the Messiah will be a servant. They describe a model of a servant which I do not feel we can fully emulate but that we can use as a model and guide as we live out our lives in Christ.

At first the text seems positive in that the servant is taught, strengthened and given understanding by the Lord and did not rebel. Then the text takes a turn and is not easy to read when we get to the part about being beat on, insulted and spit on. This is a description of what Christ went through for each one of us.

We could read this as just ‘buck up’ and it will be over soon. I believe that trivializes it too much as the servant is being humbled because he feels it is being obedient. The closer we walk with Christ, the more we may be called to be different than the world. Remember the Bible says the Lord will never give us more than we can handle.

Here is the prophecy of the Servant Messiah that we saw lived out in the person of Jesus Christ. On those days that seem so difficult; i.e. people getting on our nerves; news that affects our lives or people we care about; tasks that seem overwhelming; remember that to be obedient means looking to Christ as we are still called to be servants through the easy and tough times in life.

We will be attacked in many different ways, especially as we strive to walk closer to Christ. Hold on to the promises we have been given, read scripture, pray and tell God how you feel. Hopefully we can grow into the servant that says “Every morning God makes me eager to hear what God is going to teach us”

Prayer: Lord, so many times we are challenged with situations we would rather not have to endure, but we realize as Christians we are not immune from them. We ask that you would send the Holy Spirit to remind us to look to you and your promises that we be the servants that Christ modeled for us. In Jesus name, Amen.

Rev. Bruce J. Thorsen

March 13 – Psalm 31: 9-16



After reading this small part of the Psalm, I went to the beginning and read it in its entirety. In the bible I use, the title reads “A Prayer for Protection.” The same theme is repeated over and over, not just in the 8 verses that I originally read. *God is our protector*. He will keep us safe and have mercy on us. We may feel weak in front of our enemies, both physically and emotionally but with God’s help and compassion, we are safe. By claiming God as our Lord and Savior, He will have pity on us and rescue us from what ever persecutes us. We are not to feel weak, ashamed or unable to survive, we have God on our side. Always have and He will always be there.

Gracious God –

Keep us all safe for anyone or anything that might plot against us. Remind us that we should not feel ashamed or hurt from what others do or say about us. Show us how to trust you Lord, and claim you as our God. Give us the guidance to know that our life is in your hands. Amen

Jenn Vajda

March 14 – Philippians 2: 5-11

father
lord
confess bestowed
r s
e cross
h u
t o
J.O.Y h
u
E_earth m
a
S_ame mind
U_nder earth
God death
philippianS a
o v
r servent
y n

Christopher Michael

March 15 – Matthew 26: 14-56

“What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?” This is what Judas (one of the twelve disciples) had said to the chief priests. The priest had then decided that the life of the holy one was worth thirty pieces of silver. I don't know the equivalency in today's pay rate, but the life Jesus is truly worth, as master card says, “priceless.” There is no amount of money, no tangible/concrete possession that is worth a life. Let alone the life of God's son. As you can tell this isn't believed by everyone.

The disciples obviously followed and believed the words that were said and preached by Jesus. Well, that would be all of them except Judas. In there following they needed to find a place to eat the Passover meal. *“Go into the city to a certain man and say to him, the teacher says, my time is at hand (remember this), I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples.”* Passover was then prepared.

“Is it I, Lord?, Is it I, Lord?, Is it I, Lord?” Then asked another eight times. This is all asked to Jesus after a statement he had made; *“Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.”* Then asked for the twelfth time, *“Is it I, Rabbi?”* This now being asked by Judas. With the response from Jesus being, *“You have said so.”*

Later during the supper, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, *“Take, eat; this is my body,”* and he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, *“Drink of it, all of you, for this my blood of the covenant, which poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”*

These are the most important things that happen to me in this chapter. Also in the chapter, Jesus states that he will be denied three times. Peter denies the denials, but is proven wrong when Jesus finds him sleeping a few times after he goes off to pray. *“Sleep and take your rest later on. See, the hour is at hand (Did you remember this?), and the son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, lets us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand.”*

“The hour is at hand,” is said many times, in many ways throughout the bible. This to me shows the power of Jesus. He is given the power of strength, wisdom, patience, and many other things from his Father. He then preaches such things to his disciples, who then preach themselves. It is a pay it forward type affect. Just to cap off real quick. Judas does betray him and it was the hour at hand. Judas gives Jesus a kiss (a sign to show others which was he) and he is then seized, after telling one of his followers, *“Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will parish by the sword.”* This is very true to me. This showing me that some things are better off not be fought for, though many things are.

This is Jesus we are talking about here. He pleads to Judas and his follower that they could have taken him at anytime, but, they waited until now. This is showing me that Jesus truly does know what is going to happen next. The only difference with then and our life now is that we are given a road to travel. This road will have twists and turn, bumps in it, cracks, many different things. Jesus just gives us the choice to pick the right path, and I would like to think that in my case that one day two people follow that same path together.

Christopher Michael

March 16 – Palm Sunday – Matthew 21: 1b-11



“The disciples left and did what Jesus had told them to do.”

Out of eleven verses, this is the verse that I kept reading over and over again. In many of the texts within the bible we read that the disciples did what Jesus told them to do. However, sentences like these sometimes get skimmed over when we try to explain what the text is actually

saying. Yet, verses like these are just as important.

The disciples gave up everything to follow Jesus. They left their families, jobs, and material possessions to follow Jesus. How many of us would do the same thing? How many of us would give up everything to be a disciple of Jesus? How many of us would do exactly what Jesus told us to? These are things I thought about as I read this verse. Would I be willing to give up everything for Jesus if the opportunity was put in front of me? I know I can't answer those questions, but what I do know is that there are going to be times in our lives when Jesus will ask us to drop everything and follow him. I know that in each of our lives Jesus will call us to do his work. For some of us, it will be giving up one day a month to serve food at the homeless shelter. For others it will be a 2 week mission trip to Thailand to help clean up the beaches and villages just hit by a tsunami. Although we may never be able to give up everything like the 12 disciples did, I know that for each and every one of us there will be a time that God will ask us to drop everything and be a disciple. I think God has a plan for each of us, and in that plan, we are each given the opportunity to be disciples of Jesus. Whether or not we use the opportunity to be Jesus' disciple is up to us.

Nicole May

March 17 – Isaiah 42: 1-9

“He will not crush those who are weak or quench the smallest hope.”

Hope.....what do you hope for. One of my hopes and prayers has been that all of my family members (those unchurched and unsaved) would one day trust Jesus as their Savior too. I was given hope somewhere around 1999 in a vision.

It started one Sunday here at LCR. I was leaving church thru the hallway leading to the fellowship hall. My eye caught a piece of paper hanging on the bulletin board. It had been placed there by Jyll Foy (for those who do not know, she was the wife of our former pastor). It was a sheet of paper with 2 columns of lines going down the sheet that had been drawn for anyone to sign up to participate on evangelism teams. I was drawn to and intrigued by this list but not quite sure why.

By the time I got home I had a sudden severe headache. I took some aspirin and laid down on my bed and closed my eyes. Upon closing my eyes I immediately saw a vision in my mind. I was observing myself from behind sitting staring at that list. This time it was full of names but I could not read them. Perceiving this to be a list of new Christians I was anxious to read the names, hopeful it was family members. Each time I tried to move closer to read the names written they would fade from the list and not reappear. So I just sat motionless, staring at this piece of paper for an extended period of time until I was called to take a phone call.

A couple years ago someone or some persons had hope that we should start a Saturday evening church service. This service and Cheryl Varga's leadership became the catalyst that brought many of my family members into church. One Saturday evening 9 family members became baptized. Several others have followed. I still have hope that there will be more because that list had many names on it.

So... what do you hope for? Don't give up on it for you never know how or when God may fulfill those dreams.

Marian Robey

March 18 – 1 Corinthians 1: 18-31

I remember my Grandfather (Frank Ehrenfeld Sr.) writing something at his desk when I was a teenager. Of all things, he was working on his obituary. I almost laughed when I pointed out the obvious, “Ah, Grandpa you’re not dead.”

“No, not yet, but I wanted everyone to get it right.” he said.

“Get what right?” I inquired.

“For friends and family to see all that I achieved and built and how I have prospered on this earth” (He really did talk like that). He proceeded to list the educational degrees, community service awards, church activities, stations in honorable organizations, etc. He really did have an incredible CV. I was most fascinated by his time in the armed forces.

It was funny. Hearing him explain it all to a disinterested teenager somehow made the situation clear to him. “You know, I guess I can sum all of this up by saying ‘Here lies a really accomplished sinner – a child of god’”. His obituary, written years before his death (he was a very prepared man), still speaks to me.

The Bible is full of God using people in their ‘weakness’ for his purposes. It is almost like God gets a kick out of the challenge of using those of us who are broken, weak, and powerless to do mighty things when we call upon and do them in the name of our Lord. Paul points out this situation to those in Corinth. I wonder if there were those who felt small for not having all of the answers. I wonder if there were those who felt cheated for not reaping some worldly reward for their belief or for not seeing justice done. I wonder if others could just not convey what they felt in their hearts for God to those who did not look to our Lord for life.

I see the faith of my children as wiser than my analytical rationalizing of truths. I envy them for that relationship with Jesus which has not been tainted by the world. Lord, keep me weak, keep me humble, keep me ignorant of the trap of intelligence, and yet hold me firm in your hands as I boast of my true identification... child of God.

Frank Ehrenfeld III

March 19 – John 13: 21-32

It is difficult to be betrayed by a loved one. Knowing that someone who had loved us at one time could intentionally inflict harm causes us great pain. It stops us in our tracks and makes us question everything. Nothing seems to make sense anymore. When Judas was preparing to betray Jesus, Jesus told him to “go and do it quickly”. Quickly or slowly, would it have made

any difference? Maybe it is like ripping a bandage off – we are going to experience pain either way, but if we do it quickly we can get it over with and not prolong the pain. Jesus felt the pain of betrayal by someone he loved. He knew that it was going to happen, he expected it, and still when Judas left, Jesus felt the pain of his actions. Jesus feels our pain. He knows our pain – intimately. He comforts us with the assurance that we are not alone.

Rev. Susan Bamburak

March 20 – Maundy Thursday – John 13: 1-17, 31b-35



“A new commandment I give you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you”

Sounds like such a simple command, but is it?
What does it mean to love as Jesus loves?

It means:

Humility

Kneeling to wash another’s feet

Serving instead of being served

Loving our enemies

Praying for those who persecute us

Self-Sacrifice

Unconditional love

A willingness to give

giving one’s life for the sake of the world.

Lord Jesus, I know that on my own I am incapable of loving as you love. Through the power of your Spirit in me, help me to grow in love for you and others that I may be a instrument of your saving love. Amen

Pastor Sharon Taylor

March 21 – Good Friday – Isaiah 52: 13-53:12



1. Grew up obeying the Lord
2. Looked human and lived a life as an average human, not being classified as poor or wealthy
3. Never sinned
4. Healed and cured the sick and dying

5. Fed the hungry
6. Gave shelter to the homeless
7. Guided those who were lost
8. Condemned to death without a fair trial
9. Endured great pain for us
10. Gave his life on a cross and took away all of our sins, so that we would have eternal life

These are just ten things Jesus did all for us. Number 10, of course, was the ultimate sacrifice. He gave up everything, his life and perfection for us. How blessed are we? We have someone who loves us so much that he would give everything to let us live. The day he was nailed to the cross he took on all our sins. He gave us a life of forgiveness. Sometimes in the midst of our so called “crazy lives” we forget all that Jesus really did. If you really stop to think about it, it is truly Amazing! Jesus is truly Amazing! All he did for us is truly AMAZING! So don’t forget to thank Jesus. Thank him for your life. Thank him for forgiveness. Thank him for his love. Basically, thank him for everything, for he was the one who gave up everything so that each and every one of us could have eternal life.

Nicole May

March 22- Holy Saturday – Isaiah 55: 1-11

Seek the LORD while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake their way, and the unrighteous their thoughts; let them return to the LORD, that he may have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

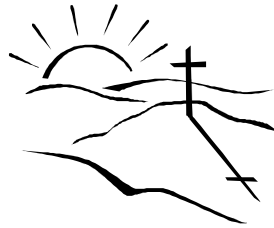
How many times in our lives have we thought we knew better than God? How many times have we wished we could tell God our plan or rather, how many times did we not only wish, but rather we acted out our plans and our great ideas because we thought we knew better than God? We have all done it. But it is here in Isaiah that we are put in our place! We are not God. We hear God’s words, “*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways...For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.*”

Often on this day, Silent Saturday, we jump to tomorrow. We want it to be Easter – but not yet. Don’t jump too fast. Today we can rest in the arms of Christ waiting and watching for Christ to come. No matter what is going on in our lives that we want to have fixed or made new, we can rest in knowing that we are in Christ and all of our concerns are in Christ as well. We don’t need to jump to the end. Rather, because we know what tomorrow will bring both in the short term and the long term we can be still today. We can know that when life is twisting and turning or that when life seems to be at an absolute stand still - there is hope for a new tomorrow. That there is life after death and that there is hope in the face of sorrow. So today, let us be silent. Let us be prayerful and let us be filled with the hope and peace of Christ.

Gracious God fill us with your peace. Remind us of your presence and let us remember always that you are God the one who brings order out of chaos and life after death. In Jesus name we pray, Amen!

Jenn Casey

April 8- Resurrection of our Lord – Romans 6: 3-13



When my girls were little my most favorite children's book to read to them at night was a book called, "I'll Love You Forever, I'll Like You for Always." It is a very popular book and I'm sure many of you have read it. The story is an accounting of a mother tucking her son into bed and every night until he was grown she sang him the same song. It went like this: *"I'll love you forever, I'll like you for always, As long as I'm living, My baby you'll be."* Almost every night for years, I read this story to my children and many nights they recited the lines with me. It was a beautiful book that still brings tears to my eyes when I think of it.

Today, on this Easter Sunday, I cannot help but think of this story. Today through the words of St. Paul we hear, *"We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."* The message of Easter is clear. God is gracious and our sins have been forgiven. Jesus Christ has conquered death, and in our baptisms we have been washed in the death of Christ and we are resurrected with him and given life eternal.

It is Easter Sunday, and the Lord God holds us all in the crook of his arms and sings us his everlasting song, "I'll love YOU forever. I'll love YOU for always. As long as I'm living, my children you'll be."

Forever. Forever and ever. Forever and ever and ever. The steadfast love of the Lord endures forever.

Alleluia! Alleluia!! Christ is Risen... he is risen indeed!!

Amen

Pastor Colleen Cox