



## Lenten Devotions 2022

By the Lutheran Campus Ministry community and  
University Lutheran Church

Tempe, Arizona

Special thanks to:

Eric Lehnhardt and Catherine (Willis) Grimmer for organizing and putting this devotional book together.

*~Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.*

*~Colossians 4:2*

Dear Lenten Sojourner:

Thank you for joining our community on the church's path to the cross of Christ this season of Lent. The devotions which shall engage us were written by our faith community; the congregation of University Lutheran Church, students in our campus ministry from Arizona State University, Grand Canyon University, surrounding schools of higher learning and alumni from our ministry. In fact it was three alumni who put this all together.

Always I am impressed by the seriousness of these authors in taking on these devotions. Some gather around our fireplace in the campus center with laptops open, working side by side. Others ask to see previous year's devotions and take pictures of some writings to get an idea of how it is done. Still others sit down with me and have a conversation about their task.

Yes, you have in your hand a devotional. However, it seems to me some of the greatest devotion was the effort put into these writings and the dedication of those consistently reading them throughout Lent. In the midst of raising families, working, and running a household; in the midst of studying, attending class, preparing dissertations, doing labs or projects and writing papers, these authors and you readers find time and dedication to reflect upon a text and write a devotion. This is an exercise that so stays with some that years later alumni write and alumni coordinate these writings.

Thank you for traveling with us this Lent. We look forward to seeing you in Jerusalem and beyond!

Gratefully in Christ,

Gary N. McCluskey  
Pastor, University Lutheran Church  
Campus Pastor, Arizona State University

Ash Wednesday, March 2nd

## **The purpose of Christian community -- Encourage one another**

Hebrews 10:23-25

When reading this passage from Hebrews, it's hard not to think about the pandemic and the "new normal" we've experienced in churches and congregations all over the world. We are told in these verses that we shouldn't give up meeting together, and that we should encourage one another by coming together as a Christian community. But what about when you can't meet safely together in-person anymore? Hebrews didn't give us specific instructions on how to handle COVID-19. To me, that is the beauty of this passage. There will always be hardships and interruptions that make it easy to find excuses to stop coming together. But pushing through it and adapting to the circumstances can reinvigorate a community to become even stronger. I have been particularly amazed and uplifted by the resiliency of churches and our Christian community throughout the pandemic. As an LCM alum, I found myself able to worship with the ULC community from across the country, which is something I couldn't have done before. In many ways, adapting to these new circumstances has given us a new way to experience the Christian community and reinforce the message from Hebrews better than ever before. No matter what is going on in the world, we must find ways to keep coming together.

*Prayer: Lord, thank you for the fellowship of ULC and the ability to be part of this community. Please help me continue to come together with my brothers and sisters in Christ through whatever means are possible, so that we can continue to grow together in your Word. Amen.*

By Melanie Brown

Thursday, March 3rd

## **Community in action (Christian Works) -- Do not merely wish others well**

James 2:15-17

In a world where we are inundated with the influx of social media and the “new norms” of society, it is a rewarding gift to live out God’s greatest command; love one another.

Several years ago as I was reading in the New Testament, I stumbled upon a simple sentence. “If I have faith that can move mountains, but do not love; I am nothing.” Knowing exactly how nothingness seemingly felt, it really stood out to me.

I dug deeper into the word only to discover that that word love encompassed ALL of the following: “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.” (1 Corinthians 13:4-8 NIV)

Living to honor God above all in shallow and dim world, I created my life mantra of “Called to Love & Be the Light.” This simple act of obedience and reverence to our Lord has been one of the most incredible and life changing acts of love. Coming to believe that life is not about me, I am able to authentically pour out God’s love to all. As I live out my life, I realize that I may be the only Bible someone reads. As Christians, we must lead by example and have undoubting faith in His unfailing love and promises. We must also be reminded that faith without works is dead. Choose to allow His light to shine through you.

*Prayer: Heavenly Father, as I work towards the command in which you gave for us to love one another, I pray my heart be opened in humble authenticity. May I offer a beacon of hope to those around me by allowing your light to shine brightly through me. Lord, infuse my mind and heart with the filter of pure love.*

By James Bender

Friday, March 4th

**How to wait for Jesus together: Be dressed, ready for service**

Luke 12:35-38

“Be dressed, ready for service, and keep your lamps burning, like servants waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. Truly I tell you, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the middle of the night or toward daybreak.”

We invite you to read today’s passage once, twice, or more and to journal your own prayer below.

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Saturday, March 5th

### **Gathering around Jesus – the healing of the paralytic**

Mark 2:1-12

There is so much to interrogate about this story. There are so many details left out of this narrative, and so many aspects of this story that we think we know. Who is the paralyzed man? Who are the four with him? How did they know to bring him to Jesus? Whose house are they in? The details we are given speak volumes.

First, we are told the story takes place in Jesus' hometown. In the previous chapter, we were given a glimpse of the beginning of Jesus' ministry. He just began his ministry of healing, preaching, and exorcising spirits, and initiated the process of gathering his disciples. In other words, Jesus is building his street cred. But why is this necessary if Jesus is from Capernaum?

Even if the people of the town know Jesus the man, they have yet to be introduced to Jesus' authority to forgive sin, to teach, and to heal. They might be familiar with Jesus, but they do not know him. Yet. In comes the paralyzed man.

The four people who brought the paralyzed man to Jesus committed their time, energy, and problem-solving abilities- even risking their (existing or potential) relationship with the person whose roof they destroyed- to get him to Jesus through both the crowd and the physical barrier of the home. They loved this man, or at least cared enough about his healing to go to such lengths for him. The man must have trusted these people to carry him up to the roof and then lower him down to Jesus, since he couldn't exactly break his own fall were they to drop him.

Did the man have such faith that he told those who loved him, those he trusted, to take him to Jesus to be healed? The plight of the man must have been desperate enough, or the love for this man great enough to move these four people to faith in Jesus' ability to heal him. His relief would be their relief; his healing would be their healing. The impacts of the miracle reach far beyond the body being healed.

Jesus sees the faith of those who brought the man, sees the man's need, and understands that his needs are not just physical. I'm curious whether the man said anything to Jesus during this encounter. Verse 5 says Jesus saw the faith of the man's companions, but what of the man? Would he not have believed in Jesus' ability to heal his body unless he could be freed from his sin? The crowd, at least, would be convinced of the forgiveness by seeing his physical healing. Traditional interpretation of this story tells us that the man's physical disability was due to his and/or his parents' sins. But then I wonder, wouldn't we all then be paralyzed by our own sin? Perhaps we are in ways we cannot see. But Jesus can, and Jesus did, and so he forgives us as he forgave the man, and in so doing opens our hearts to believe in healing. Forgiveness is an expression of God's love for us, as carrying the man to Jesus was an expression of his companions' love for him. Love is the catalyst, faith is the means, and healing is the ends.

Because of this, the people were amazed, and God was glorified.

During this season of Lent, may we experience God's love that forgives, be led into deeper faith, and experience the fullness of God's ability to heal. Amen.

By Taina Diaz-Reyes

Sunday, March 6th

Did you know that Sundays aren't included in the (numerical) forty days of Lent? From Ash Wednesday to Holy Saturday is 46 days, but only 40 if Sundays are omitted.

You are invited to join us for worship!

We worship masked, in-person at 10:30AM Arizona time, and via livestream at [www.ulctempe.org](http://www.ulctempe.org) (click the Youtube link).

Blessings on your Sunday!



Monday, March 7th

## **Who is this?**

Mark 4:35-41

35/ That day when evening came, Jesus said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side."

36/ Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. Jesus had preached to the crowd of people and healed many who were ill or afflicted. He was tired and fell asleep in the boat. A strong storm came up unexpectedly,

37/ and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped.

38/ Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"

39/ He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!". Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

40/ He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

41/ They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

Here's Jesus, after a long day of preaching and healing people, trying to find a quiet place to unwind. How many of us have come home from work needing just a few minutes of quiet time only to be bombarded by our kiddos (and/or spouse) asking a billion questions, trying to get our attention, crying, fussing with siblings, wanting food NOW, and then questioning our behavior? Isn't it great to know that everyone has challenges and yet Jesus is still guiding us to peace?

By Deb Hull

Tuesday, March 8th

## **Equality in God's community: The reward of heaven for all laborers**

Matthew 20:1-16

“For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard. “About nine in the morning he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. He told them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ So they went. “He went out again about noon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing. About five in the afternoon he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, ‘Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?’ “‘Because no one has hired us,’ they answered. “He said to them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard.’ When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.’ The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. ‘These who were hired last worked only one hour,’ they said, ‘and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.’ But he answered one of them, ‘I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn’t you agree to work for a denarius? Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?’ So the last will be first, and the first will be last.”

We invite you to read today’s passage once, twice, or more and to journal your own prayer below.

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Wednesday, March 9th

## **God's promises to his people -- The Song of Zechariah**

Luke 1:67-75

Today we reflect on the promises that God made to his people. How amazing is that promise?! "Raising the horn of salvation for us, salvation from our enemies, rescue us from the hand of our enemies!" We basically have our own personal champion on our side. Christians on the whole believe in hope for the future. The pray more worry less concept comes to mind.

For me this concept, believing in God's promises for me, is really hard. I recently took a personality test for my work to see what my skills are in my leadership role. This questionnaire broke down your skills into 24 different categories, with top strengths, middle strengths, and low strengths. Down at the very bottom of my list was "hope." What a terribly sad concept; my weakness, essentially, is hope! That can't possibly be right, how is my lowest strength hope?!

Looking around at the state of the world right now it is not hard to feel like there is no hope out there. Even for Christians, it has been a rough couple of years. How do you believe in the promises of the future when you are concerned with how much it costs to fill up your gas tank or the groceries that you have always purchased just went up over \$100 almost over night. I hear my employees say that their rent has increased by \$400 or \$600 or even \$800 dollars a month. How do we remain hopeful in a seemingly hopeless world?

The answer of course is by having faith in Jesus, however hard that might be, by knowing that even though times right now might be hard that this shall pass. If Jesus is for us, who could be against us?! Ironically, my number 1 strength on that personality test was spirituality. I know in my heart that I need to fully rely on God and I am working on this during the Lenten Season to get my head to work in tandem with my heart and have a sense of hope for the future. If we reread the promise that was laid out in the passage from Luke, we can see that God has a plan for our future and we just need to let him be in control.

By Victoria English

Thursday, March 10th

**New start in Christian community: Let the thief labor and share bread**

Ephesians 4:28

I think we live in a world of convenience. Especially in a time where I can order something online and be frustrated that it won't be at my door the next day. I can just leave my house and have food already made for me just drive thru and grab and go. Some things though can't be just ordered or picked up and consumed. Doing God's work is not convenient, not easy. It can be taxing on one's self to do the hard work, to pick up people's boulders, when people are down or carrying too much. Sometimes we cannot phone in our spreading of the spirit. We have to put on our gloves and do the hard work. Thought for the day: What deeds could I give today?

*Dear Lord, give us strength, guide us in our day to help others in need. Amen*

By Colton Grimmer

Friday, March 11th

**Our new fraternity in Christ: We are adopted as heirs**

Galations 4:4-7

“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.”

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Saturday, March 12th

## **Communion with Christ: We are one body in this one Lord**

1 Corinthians 10:16-17

It's Sunday morning. We're gathering around the tablet in our jammies with breakfast and coffee in front of us, beginning to watch the livestream of our church service. Our regular Sunday morning routine is a little different due to the pandemic, but we're learning to be flexible and improvise. Flexible and improvise are the words of the day, because we've just realized that it is a Communion Sunday. Oh darn, I forgot to get the fancy bread and wine at the grocery store earlier that week. Quick, scramble to the kitchen during the first hymn and dig through the pantry. What do we have that's worthy of Communion? Cinnamon Toast Crunch cereal? Not professional enough. Everything-flavored bagels? Too chewy. Beer bread? Well, we are a Lutheran-Methodist family after all...But what about the wine? Being new parents, we have half of a six-pack of beer, sparkling cider, and an excessive amount of coffee.

This story ended with lots of laughter at how ridiculous we were being. God doesn't care if we're communing with home-baked bread and kosher wine, gluten-free wafers and grape juice, or a bagel and coffee. It is not the bread or wine itself, but the Holy Spirit being present in those elements and with us when we partake. Through the blessing of the bread and wine, through the sharing of the meal—whether it be us all gathered together in one socially-distanced space or via the internet—we are one body in this one Lord.

*God of the world, we give you thanks for Communion—both the sacrament of the bread and wine and the act of communing together in one body. We thank you for reminding us of your presence in our lives and for calling us to serve and worship you, regardless of where we physically are. Give us hope for the days we can gather together to worship and commune safely, and show us how to be one body united in you. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*

By Alicia Homard

Sunday, March 13th

*Lord God, Heavenly Father,*

*I consider myself Your dear child and You my beloved Father.*

*Not because I deserve it, nor could ever merit it, but because my dear Lord, Your only begotten Son Jesus Christ would be my Brother.*

*Of His own accord He offers and makes this blessing known to me. Since I may consider myself His brother, as He regards me, You will permit me to become and remain a child of Yours forever.*

*Amen.*

– Martin Luther

Join us for worship, in-person or online! See [www.ulctempe.org](http://www.ulctempe.org) for service times and our livestream link.

Monday, March 14th

## **Experiencing disaster in community: Noah and family on the ark**

Genesis 7:1-14; 8:13-22

Many of us can now deeply relate to the story of Noah and the ark, only the flood is a virus and the ark is our homes. Much has been lost... plans, livelihoods, health, and lives. There may have been times we each felt abandoned, living in isolation from others. We've each had our own journey but we are never alone. God was with us and our loved ones were with us... even if it was over Zoom or watching from Heaven.

I can't help but wonder how Noah and his family spent their time isolated in the ark. How did they care for themselves and one another? Did they play games, clean, rearrange, make a sourdough starter, have deep conversations, disagree, rest? One thing I imagine most clearly is that they probably spent much of the time clinging tight to what mattered most in front of them and praying for the future that awaited them.

When Noah exited the ark, he built an altar and made a sacrifice to the Lord. Although we are still finding our way through this storm, may we trust and hold tight to God's promise. May we plan and look forward to a new beginning... set a new precedent of caring for our community, the Earth, and God's creatures... all the while praising God for each rainbow in our lives.

*Heavenly Father, in this scripture You say that "As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease." Help us to trust you through it all and to know peace in the waiting, love in the hurting, and hope for what's to come. Amen.*

By Catherine Grimmer



Tuesday, March 15th

**Community chosen by God in love: God chose the Israelites because He loved them**

Deuteronomy 7:7-9

“The Lord did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the Lord loved you and kept the oath he swore to your ancestors that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments.”

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Wednesday, March 16th

## **Faith and Family**

Ruth 1:1-16

11/ But Naomi said, "Return home, my daughters. Why would you come with me? Am I going to have any more sons, who would become your husbands?"

12/ Return home, my daughters; I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was still hope for me – even if I had a husband tonight and then gave birth to sons....

13/ would you wait until they grew up? Would you remain unmarried for them? No, my daughters. It is more bitter for me than for you, because the Lord's hand has turned against me!"

14/ At this they wept aloud again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye, but Ruth clung to her.

15/ "Look", said Naomi, "your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her."

16/ But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God."

Although all three of the women were widowed, only Orpah returned to her homeland while Ruth chose to stay with Naomi in Moab. Ruth's devotion to Naomi was uncommon in a time when widows didn't have sources of income of their own. In later verses, Naomi and Ruth became gleaners in the wheat fields in order to survive. They were brave and resourceful women and may serve as heroines to women who currently find themselves in similar circumstances.

By Deb Hull

Thursday, March 17th

## **The Value of Community: Brothers Dwell in Unity**

Psalm 133

In Psalm 133 it says “How good and pleasant it is when God’s people live in unity” it’s like “precious oil” or fresh “dew”. The verse sounds so refreshing from what we are seeing in the news and media these days. It seems exhausting that everything is always an argument between people. But when you do feel those glimpses of togetherness or surround yourself with the right community it can feel so empowering. The hardest thing about growing up is deciding whether the people in your life add positive energy or negative energy to your community. Letting go of some people who dim your community. When you purposely and skillfully choose the people that you surround yourself with, that's where you feel good and the pleasant! That’s when you feel empowered to show your true self.

Another reason to hold your community close is when disaster hits us. These are the people that will be there to get you through some of the bad times in life. Your rocks. Within the last few years, I think we can all reflect on how we and the people around us have acted during some trying times. Are we being a good community member to others as well? Looking for ways to help in your own community? Something so little can mean so much to someone else in a time of need, even a letter or a text checking in sometimes just being there helps immensely.

Always keep your eyes and heart open to build your community stronger. Something I learned in college and out of college is that you never know if that next person you meet will end up being a big part of your life. Don’t close yourself off to new friends or experiences to meet new people. It reminds me of these feelings talked about in Psalms 133 when I meet someone new and become instant friends! The bigger your community the better! “For there the Lord bestows his blessing, even life forevermore.”

By Molly Mardany

Friday, March 18th

**Forgiveness in community: Seven times seventy**

Matthew 18:21-22

“Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?” Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.”

We invite you to read today’s passage once, twice, or more and to journal your own prayer below.

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Saturday, March 19th

## **The shared call of following Christ: The Great Commission**

Matthew 28:18-20

A simple ask, but a complicated task is what comes to my mind with this passage. In a time where division and uncertainty are ever present. We need to remind ourselves and others that the goodness that comes from Jesus's teachings is so important now. We need to share it either by words or by deeds to our communities. Knowing also that the Lord is with us always is comforting when we are bombarded by voices that only want to divide us and bring us down. The Lord's voice says to love our neighbors as ourselves. We should take the Lord's message and try to show our communities that we are here for them. Thought for the day: How do I share Jesus's message?

*Lord, guide us while we travel through our day and let us be open to spread your message. Amen*

By Colton Grimmer

Sunday, March 20th

*Eternal God, eternal Trinity,*

*You have made the blood of Christ so precious  
through his sharing in your divine nature.*

*You are a mystery as deep as the sea;  
the more I search, the more I find,  
and the more I find the more I search for you.*

*But I can never be satisfied;  
what I receive will ever leave me desiring more.*

*When you fill my soul I have an ever-greater hunger,  
and I grow more famished for your light.*

*I desire above all to see you,  
the true light, as you really are.*

*Amen.*

– St. Catherine of Siena

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Monday, March 21st

## **Community amidst separation – Paul writes to Timothy**

2 Timothy 1:1-5a

Although we may have grown up in a Christian household and learned the value of repentance (turning away from sin and fully surrendering our lives to Christ), being in the world can slowly drown out the significance of living to honor Him.

I had been raised in a non Lutheran church, but never knew Jesus. It was more about 'being a good person' than a real relationship with Him. As an infant I was brought into the world premature with a blood clot on my brain, lungs underdeveloped and I died. I was obviously brought back to life by the medical team. However, my entire life I knew there was so much more out there spiritually than that in which we can ever physically see. It wasn't until years later that I discovered I harbored my experience in my subconscious mind with no words to describe my Heaven encounter. I came to fully believe two things; there is no love like the love of our God on this earth no matter how hard we search. And, we are in the world. Not of the world. We are spiritual beings on a human journey.

As close as I had gotten to God and living for Him, eventually the world began drowning out His voice. I could always feel a tap on my shoulder with Him saying "James, James, James," just trying to get me to turn around. But, the superficial human side of me kept looking the other way.

Years later as I eventually had to hit rock bottom to find my solid foundation, He spoke to me. He assured me that He is a God who demands everything and stops at nothing! Right then and there I knew I had finally ran into the foot of the cross and made a diligent decision to surrender to self.

In a dim world, we must choose to allow His light to shine through us by living a life in the Word while we are in the world. Actions speak louder than words and people notice. We truly can choose joy in all circumstances.

*Prayer: Dear God, thank you for the gift of the Holy Spirit. May you continue to work in and through me as I make a reverent decision to surrender to self each moment of every day. May my actions and words speak volumes in displaying your unfailing love and promises. In a world where times have rapidly changed and eyes turned away, may your love be a beacon of hope.*

By James Bender

Tuesday, March 22nd

**Doing unto Christ what you do unto others: Sheep and goats**

Matthew 25:34-40

“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’

“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

We invite you to read today’s passage once, twice, or more and to journal your own prayer below.

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Wednesday, March 23rd

## **How to live with God and with each other– the greatest commandments**

Mark 12:28-34

The law itself is meant to distinguish Israel as God's people- a priestly nation set apart from the world in its observance of God's laws. It is a guide on how to remain pure for the sake of serving as God's priests in the world, how to deal with each other justly, and how to reflect God's mercy and grace. The concept of 'the spirit of the law' in legal interpretation today can be useful when looking at the purpose of the law of Moses in first century Palestine.

To ask a rabbi (Jesus) to condense the 613 laws of the Torah down to one law that is 'first' in importance is truly a test of whether Jesus can convey that he understands the spirit of the law, or the reason the law of Moses exists.

In response to a question requiring one answer, Jesus gives two. However, the two responses are intimately connected. First in importance is loving God with each part of your being. But to love God is to participate in God's purpose: creating a people set apart as God's own. To love God means you must love God's people, as God has done. To love God's people, you must know how God has loved them, and use that as a template for how you love them. What does God's love look like?

Mercy.

Grace.

Justice.

Provision.

Protection.

Commitment.

Loyalty.

Patience.

Forgiveness.

The scribes and other Temple leaders often argued with Jesus, but here we see a scribe agreeing with Jesus. To put their conversation in even greater contrast to Jesus' other interactions with the scribes, Jesus not only agrees with the scribe but says, "You are not far from the kingdom of God" (verse 34).

In this season of reflection, may we draw near to the kingdom of God as we learn how to love God with our whole selves, about how God loves God's people, and how to convey that love through how we live our lives. Amen.

By Taina Diaz-Reyes

Thursday, March 24th

## **Putting the "unity" in community: The body of Christ**

Ephesians 4:1-6

My youngest daughter Catherine Grimmer invited me to write a devotion. I picked this passage as it has always been my hope to live a life with Christ. To be completely humble and gentle, be patient and love one another, to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace. It is not always easy in the troubled world we live in or the difficulties we all experience during our life. Our God is always with us and gives us the strength and body of believers to support and encourage each one of us.

Catherine's youngest son Edwin was baptized on 2/6/2022 by Pastor Gary at University Lutheran Church. We gathered as one body, family, and friends to have Edwin Christopher baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. What a wonderful reminder and time to give thanks to God for His gifts and the Unity in the Body of Christ.

*Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for the gift of baptism and the Body of Christ. May we all remember the unity in the Body of Christ and love one another. Amen*

By Martha Coy

Friday, March 25th

**Putting the "commune" in community: Communal life of the early Church**

Acts 2:42-47

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”

We invite you to read today’s passage once, twice, or more and to journal your own prayer below.

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Saturday, March 26th

**The work of those who follow Jesus -- The harvest is plentiful**

Luke 10:1-3

We've been hearing a lot in the national news about the current worker shortage in the United States. There are millions of jobs open, but there are not enough workers to fill them. In Christianity, there is a spiritual workforce shortage. Before Jesus sent out 72 of His earliest followers to spread the word of God, He tells them that the harvest (His love) is plentiful, but that the workers (His followers) are few. He compares them to lambs among wolves, knowing the great difficulties that these followers will face in growing the new church. While it's incredible to see how far the church has come since those early days, there is still a shortage of those willing to spread God's Word. This lenten season, let's remember that God has already provided us with his plentiful and unlimited love. Now it's up to us to grow the spiritual workforce and share his abundant harvest with others.

*Prayer: Lord, thank you for the blessing of your unfailing love. Help us to spread your Word and build your kingdom each and every day. Amen.*

By Melanie Brown

Sunday, March 27th

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:  
where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon;  
where there is doubt, faith;  
where there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness, light;  
where there is sadness, joy.*

*O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek  
to be consoled as to console,  
to be understood as to understand,  
to be loved as to love.  
For it is in giving that we receive,  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.*

*Amen.*

– St. Francis of Assisi

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Monday, March 28th

**The importance of time away: Jesus sends the disciples to rest**

Mark 6: 30-32

When I first read this passage, it reminded me a lot of my own work. When you work hard and you accomplish goals you need time outside of work to rest, relax, and refresh. In my opinion this is Jesus being a good leader to his disciples. He understands the work and teachings that his disciples have done and feels that their successes deserve maybe what today in age would be called "Vacation Time." I don't think that this time is simply just for the disciples. I think it is also time for Jesus to see the work that his disciples have done and truly reflect on their hard work and teachings. His disciples had no time for rest and relaxation, not even time to sit and eat. Jesus recognizes this and grants them time themselves to rest, relax, and refresh. This allows them all time to reflect on their teachings and to truly appreciate the gifts that they have been given.

*Dear Heavenly Father, Thank you for allowing us to be your hands, your words, and your ears. Thank you for allowing us to continually rejoice and spread your good word. We praise our time to do your work. In your name, Amen.*

By Chelsea DeMoor

Tuesday, March 29th

## **Learning about God in community: Boy Jesus at the Temple with the teachers**

Luke 2:46-49

You've seen Home Alone, right? Kid gets left behind while the rest of the family jets off and has to fend off the bad guys while his parents are struggling to get back home to the kiddo? In every movie of the series, the kid, left home alone (you see, the clue is in the title), doesn't actually fend off the bad guys all on his own. Along the way, he meets people, gets curious and forges friendships with neighbors and strangers alike. And when his parents return to a destroyed household, they only have one response— pure joy and relief.

We can only imagine what it would have been like for Mary and Joseph, but I picture it alot like the Home Alone movie parents: three days running to, from, and around a Jerusalem packed full of festivities and people, trying to get back to their kid and praying he's ok. But kiddo Jesus isn't altogether different from each of the kid characters in Home Alone, learning from the community he finds in his Father's house. And though we don't have the same vivid picture of Mary and Joseph, I like to imagine their response to finding Jesus is also similar— joy and relief.

What of yourself can you see in the people of these stories? What if, as the kids, we search for community and seek the curiosity to learn from the people who are a part of it? What if, as the parents, we have to deal with the mistakes we make and greet their resolve with joy and relief, even when there are many other emotions and thoughts likely swirling? There is value in each of these stories. But what if we can also be the community, supporting and teaching others as they need it? As Jesus later taught, "let your light shine before others, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven"-- it all boils down to our actions, our good works within our community, even as we learn, question, and grow. Those actions and the people they impact are the light on and glory to God.

Dear Lord, help us to be the teachers, the members of our community that can look on in awe at the understanding and answers of others. Even as we stumble and grow, help us shine your light in our world through our actions. Amen.

By Allison Miller

Wednesday, March 30th

## **What Jesus does for us: Jesus the Good Shepherd**

John 10: 7-16

A shepherd cares for a flock of sheep, a community. The sheep may at times guide and help one another, but the shepherd loves and protects them all. He lays down his life to protect each and every sheep from the wolf.

The flock knows peace because the shepherd shows love beyond understanding. The flock thanks and praises the leader of their lives. The flock shows grace for one another because the shepherd first showed grace to them.

When is a time I've known protection and peace?

When have I been protected from the wolf?

When have I shown and been shown grace?

*Dear Lord, I thank and praise You for the peace and protection You give Your flock. Help me to notice the many ways Your grace and love are present in my life today. Amen.*

By Catherine Grimmer



Thursday, March 31st

## **Community as (and for) children—Let the children come to Me**

Mark 10:13-16

I have an infant son who has begun showing interest in my coffee. He watches with fascination every time I sip from my mug, and if I hold it close enough he reaches for it. He's managed to grab it a couple times, and even once dipped his hand in the coffee before I could stop him. Now that he's become a lot more aware of the world, we're noticing he's constantly watching us, learning from us. He's still too young to speak words, but I'm working on breaking bad habits now so I don't accidentally let certain words slip that he'll decide to repeat at an inopportune moment. We're trying to say please and thank you more to each other, knowing that he's learning the behavior that we model. Our faith is important to us and we want our son to grow up in the church, so we make going to church on Sundays a priority.

This passage from Mark spoke to me in so many different ways, one being the importance of modeling faith to my child. He watches everything I do, so he watches when I pray and when I sing. He and every child out in the world is learning what it means to be a Christian by watching people like us. What sort of faith are you modeling for the people around you? How are you teaching others what it means to follow Christ by the image you present?

Another way this passage spoke to me was kind of the opposite of what I said above. Jesus speaks of receiving the kingdom of God as a little child. This made me ask, how is my infant modeling faith to me? When I look at my child's face, I see unquestionable trust. I also see an open mind eager to explore this world and learn what it has to teach him. In the children in your life, how do they show you God's love and grace and trust? If you open your mind to what these children can teach you about faith, you might find that the kingdom of God isn't so far away.

*God of all peoples, thank you for children. We ask you to open our minds and hearts to see your face in those around us. Teach us to model your kingdom to those around us, and remind us to seek you with a child-like complete trust. In your precious son's name we pray, Amen.*

By Alicia Homard

Friday, April 1st

**Being sent to community you don't trust: Sending Jonah to Ninevah**

Jonah 1-3

We invite you to read today's passage once, twice, or more and to journal your own prayer below.

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Saturday, April 2nd

## **Community in Grief – Jesus raises Lazarus**

John 11:17-44

**Jesus Wept** – Jesus was a close friend to Lazarus and was saddened by his death. Jesus also felt deep compassion for his friends Mary and Martha as they mourned the loss of their brother. In this verse, Jesus is revealed to us as the Son of Man.

**Jesus Wept** – Jesus knew that the death of Lazarus was a result of sin in this world. Martha and Mary believed in Jesus as Christ and held their hope in Lazarus being resurrected on the last day. But in God's timing, Lazarus was resurrected four days after his death; a length of time in which Lazarus' body was in decay. This miracle put Jesus on the trajectory to the cross because it showed that Jesus was the Son of God. The time had come for Jesus to carry the cross of sin and death for us, granting us His mercy and grace.

**We Wept** – We live in a fallen world where sin and death exist. But our hope is in Christ, Our Risen Savior. Three decades ago, while in labor with our firstborn child, Christina, we were informed that she had an anomaly that would prevent her from living outside of the womb. The joy of labor turned into a profound sense of grief and loss. Our community of family and friends surrounded us; just as Mary and Martha experienced in the death of Lazarus. The sadness was still present, but the love of others sustained us.

Through this experience our faith was clarified. We loved our daughter profoundly and didn't want her to die. Yet in that moment the verse memorized so long ago in Sunday School came back to us. John 3:16 tells us God the Father loved His Son so much that He sent Him to a certain death to forgive us from our sins and give us life. God the Father loved his Son, too. He also loves us, as His children through Baptism. Because of our hope in Christ, we experienced peace.

*Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for loving us so much that you gave us your Precious Son, Jesus Christ. We are lost in a world that would be darkness but through his death and resurrection we are redeemed and called your own; living in light. Thank you for giving us fellowship with others that we may be fortified in faith and sustained in times of hardship. We are in awe of your marvelous works. Amen*

By Lisa Lehnhardt

Sunday, April 3rd

“The fact that we can pray is not something to be taken for granted. It is true that prayer is a natural need of the human heart, but that does not give us any right before God.... We pray to the God in whom we believe through Christ. Therefore our prayer can never be a conjuring up of God; we do not need to present ourselves before him. We can know that God knows what we need before we ask for it. That gives our prayer the greatest confidence and a happy certainty. It is neither the formula nor the number of words but faith that reaches God in his fatherly heart, which has long known us. The proper prayer is not a deed, not an exercise, not a pious attitude, but the petition of a child to the heart of the Father.”

– Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *God is on the Cross: Reflections on Lent and Easter*

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Monday, April 4th

**Christ's example of humility toward one another: Value others above yourselves**

Phillipians 2:1-11

The Bible tells us to look after one another. It can be tough with busy schedules and this fast paced, ever changing world to stop and help others. People are in so many stages in life. Some are struggling. Some seem overwhelmed. Make plans to help somebody that is having a hard time especially now, and stick to them. Listen and try to help others. Think of ways to help instead of asking what they need, try offering what you can give. Thought for the day: Who can I offer to help?

*Dear Lord, give me clarity so I can see someone's need, and give strength to deliver. Amen.*

By Colton Grimmer

Tuesday, April 5th

**Sharing what you have with Christ and the community: The boy whose fish Jesus uses to feed the 5000**

John 6:1-14

Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias), and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the signs he had performed by healing the sick. Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples. The Jewish Passover Festival was near. When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do. Philip answered him, "It would take more than half a year's wages to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!" Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?" Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." There was plenty of grass in that place, and they sat down (about five thousand men were there). Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish. When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted." So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten. After the people saw the sign Jesus performed, they began to say, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world."

We invite you to read today's passage once, twice, or more and to journal your own prayer below.

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Wednesday, April 6th

## **Diversity of gifts from God – Spiritual gifts to each for the common good**

1 Corinthians 12:4-11

4 / There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them

5/ There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.

6/ There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.

7/ Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

8/ To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit.

9/ To another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit,

10/ to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and the interpretation of tongues.

11/ All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

This is one of my favorite scriptures and always causes me to reflect on the gifts that I have received. For example: being able to serve others, receiving miraculous opportunities, finding gratifying work, gaining wisdom and knowledge, growing in faith, and working for the common good. Thanks be to God!

By Deb Hull

Thursday, April 7th

## **Radical forgiveness in community – Paul pleads for Onesimus, a runaway**

Philemon

Onesimus is a runaway slave.

Not only has he fled from his master, Philemon, in the city of Colossae, but somehow he has found his way to the city of Rome, where an imprisoned man named Paul has instructed him about Jesus.

Paul, as it turns out, not only knows Onesimus' former master, but--can you believe it?--counts him as a brother, because Philemon, too, is a new follower of this Jesus.

And now, Paul wants something radical for Onesimus the bondservant and Philemon the master: he wants forgiveness.

Paul writes to Philemon and-- though Paul could command him as his spiritual elder-- asks him to forego all Roman right to vengeance on a runaway slave, to charge all wrongdoing that may have occurred before or after Onesimus departed to Paul's own account, and to receive Onesimus back not as a servant but as his own brother. Paul wants Onesimus to be treated as if he were Paul himself, and he knows this will be difficult for Philemon; he makes a point to tell Philemon that he thanks God for Philemon's "love for all his [God's] holy people," and he publicly copies the other leaders of the church in Colossae on his message (what works for emails today worked for letters two millennia ago).

What Paul asks Onesimus to do is even more radical: to return, under the threat of severe punishment, to his former master.

But Paul knows that it is not the rules of Rome that matter here, nor the fears and desires of sinful people. Paul knows that it is Christ that matters, and that in Christ, neither Onesimus nor Philemon is who or what they were before. They, and all believers, are a family now - Onesimus his child, Philemon his brother - because all have been forgiven in the death and resurrection of Christ, and adopted into the family of God. "...so you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God." (Gal. 4:4-7).

In Philemon, we have a brief letter that calls us to love radically, trust radically, forgive radically, and recognize that the kingdom of God is at times nothing like the kingdoms we create for ourselves here on earth.

*Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach us to see with your eyes, to love with your heart, and to trust you as our good and gracious Father. Amen.*

By Eric Lehnhardt



Friday, April 8th

**The multitude of disciples hail Christ as King: Triumphal entry into Jerusalem**

Luke 19:36-40

“As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road. When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen:

“Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!”

“Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”

Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples!” “I tell you,” he replied, “if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.”

We invite you to read today’s passage once, twice, or more and to journal your own prayer below.

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Saturday, April 9th

## "Lover of Rules or Lover of God?"

Mark 3:1-6

Repentance! The fashionable thing for Christians to do in Lent. The proper thing for disciples of Jesus to do in all times. I sometimes wonder if our biggest need for repentance is our constant hiding behind statements like, "The Bible Says!" or "Jesus/God commands us to...or not to...." That is we can hide behind what we consider to be the rules of our Christian faith. That is what is happening in this Mark text. Jesus, on the holy sabbath day of rest, heals a man. That is, Jesus performed work on a day of rest. The rules people were not happy. In fact they were so unhappy they left conspiring to destroy this one with such audacity.

Don't get too upset with these Pharisees. They wanted things to be correct and in accordance with God's laws. So do we. And we too often throw penalty flags at those who break the rules. Rules give us a bit of security. We know what is expected. We know how to act. Jesus teaches us not what the rules are but instead God's intended purpose of commandments and rules. They are to serve us. They are so we can live together in peace and harmony. Sometimes a rule must be crossed to actually serve that will of God for peace and harmony for God's people. Sometimes withered hands need to be healed regardless of the day or situation.

Yes, it is more complicated if the Christian life is more about loving one another than about strict adherence to a set of rules. Let's face it: love complicates life. Yet, would we prefer our most important relationships to be based on a set of rules or on love? Would we prefer God look at us through God's rulebook or through God's love? Love also complicates God's life.

Rules are a good thing; a guide. Jesus, on the other hand, is THE guide. When we are tempted to follow a rule instead of loving a person we need to hold that rule up to the light of Jesus. Does it fly or not? Hiding behind the rules is the easier thing. Discipleship is not about easy. It is about following Jesus. It is about the grace of God in Jesus. Grace for us, grace for others.

*Prayer: O God, rescue us from our desire to take the safe and easy route in life. Help us to not hide behind you and your commandments but to go out and serve with love those in need of what we have and what you give. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen*

By Pastor Gary McCluskey

Palm Sunday, April 10th

*O God,  
you sent our Savior  
to become truly human  
and suffer death on the cross  
as an example of humility and patience  
to be imitated by the human race.  
Mercifully grant that we may be worthy  
to have the assurance  
and the fellowship  
of his resurrection;  
through your Son,  
Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and forever.  
Amen.*

– From the historical Gelasian collect for Palm Sunday

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Holy Monday, April 11th

## **Community in joy: Rejoicing at the rebuilding of Jerusalem**

Nehemiah 12: 27-31; 38-40; 43

There are two things that stand out to me in this story. First, the Levites and musicians were sought out and brought to the wall for the celebration and second, the celebration could be heard far from Jerusalem. What is one of the first things you do when you accomplish something or a wonderful surprise happens? I know that in those moments I like to seek out others, share the joy, and celebrate together. It's something about the way God made us that a smile and a laugh are contagious. There is joy abundant when we come together and share good news. May our community celebrate together in a way that can be seen and heard miles away, just by the way we live our lives.

*Dear Lord, thank you for the gifts of community and joy. Help us to set aside judgment, jealousy, and pride so that we may celebrate joyfully with others. Amen.*

By Catherine Grimmer

Holy Tuesday, April 12th

**The Sadducees mistake the Resurrection: God of the living**

Mark 12:18-27

“Then the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him with a question. “Teacher,” they said, “Moses wrote for us that if a man’s brother dies and leaves a wife but no children, the man must marry the widow and raise up offspring for his brother. Now there were seven brothers. The first one married and died without leaving any children. The second one married the widow, but he also died, leaving no child. It was the same with the third. In fact, none of the seven left any children. Last of all, the woman died too. At the resurrection whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?”

Jesus replied, “Are you not in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God? When the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven. Now about the dead rising—have you not read in the Book of Moses, in the account of the burning bush, how God said to him, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. You are badly mistaken!”

We invite you to read today’s passage once, twice, or more and to journal your own prayer below.

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Holy Wednesday, April 13th

**God works through a community – Mordecai and Esther are put in the right place at the right time**

Esther 3:8-10; 4:13-17

It's worth reading the whole book of Esther, which is a tale of intrigue as well as salvation. A Hebrew orphan girl, who may have hoped to one day end up with some nice Jewish boy, is instead drafted into the harem of a monarch, whose beliefs, customs, and heritage were alien to her. As customary for members of the Persian harem at this time, Esther would never show her face in public again. Even communications with her cousin and guardian, Mordecai, now took place through palace messengers.

When Esther was chosen as queen, she hadn't yet advertised her Jewish heritage, as Mordecai advised. She apparently didn't even use her real name: Hadassah. If, in her 12 months of beauty treatments or her first few years as queen, she ever did come around to the idea of simply lying low and making the most of her pampered captivity, she lost that option when Haman's power trip legislated a Jewish genocide (3:10).

Even though Esther was isolated from her Jewish community outside the harem, she appeared to be the member of that community best positioned to intercede before the king on behalf of the Jews facing extermination. And she was not without community support: before she presented herself to the king unbidden (an offense usually punishable by death), the other Jews in Susa fasted with her day and night for three days. The salvation of the Jews -- in this case, a temporary salvation from physical death -- was work God accomplished through someone necessarily isolated and separated from those she loved. In the same way, the eternal, spiritual salvation offered to all people is work God accomplished through Jesus, isolated and separated from God in his innocent death. Esther's story not only demonstrates God's work through a community, but foreshadows his ultimate sacrifice on the cross. And fortunately for Esther, and for us, any separation from the community of God ends when believers are united with Him and with each other in eternal life.

Dear heavenly Father, thank you for the communities you have given us. Thank you that all people on Earth are a part of the loved and created community of God, and are offered forgiveness and salvation through your son Jesus. Help us to see individuals in that light, to welcome and love them, and, like Esther, to stand up bravely when we are called to action. Amen

By Loni Lehnhardt

Maundy Thursday, April 14th

**Sharing from what you have: The instruction of John the Baptist**

Luke 3:10-11

It is interesting that the response John gave to the people is give out. Not preach or bear down ideology but to just give. Not boasting about how good of a donor you are but to quietly give when you are able. Not martyr and become shirtless or hungry but to not hoard away everything when the true message of Jesus is to love one's neighbor and help those who need it. It can be more than just physical things like money or clothes but can be time or energy. Maybe you are a caring ear for someone who needs support. Maybe you are someone who can watch your friend or family's children so they can be free from caretaking and have a mental relief from parenting. Thought for the day: What can I give to bring comfort for someone else?

*Dear Lord, give us direction on what I can do to help someone. Amen.*

By Colton Grimmer

Good Friday, April 15th

**A community of faith that is blind to God: The Sanhedrin looks for false witnesses and does not recognize the Messiah**

Matthew 26: 57-66

I'm sure you've seen movies where a character has a life changing 'ahh haa' moment where God speaks, the lightning strikes, the sky opens up and the angels are singing. It's that very moment where their life is completely transformed and they decide to take a completely new life path.

As silly as all of that sounds, many people are waiting for that very thing to happen in their life in order to make a spiritual change. We look for signs and answered prayers, forgetting that sometimes an unanswered prayer is an answered prayer. We just hold out for that one instance where we say..."this is it!"

The Sanhedrin wanted proof of Jesus being the Messiah. And when Jesus had responded, they took Him away for blasphemy.

We must make the conscious effort to have undoubting faith in God's word. We must put on our God Goggles and begin looking at the world and our own circumstances through His eyes. There are so many God Winks given to each and every one of us throughout each and every moment of each and every day! If we are closed off from seeing His gifts, we miss out on the life changing transformations.

Pray, seek, find and be given His promises in your life. Start being attentive to and giving thanks for the simplest things in your life. You will begin seeing just how enormous His love is for us.

*Dear Heavenly Father, you know my heart. Please continue to guide me towards your love and allow my eyes to see you in all circumstances. May I be open to hearing your voice and have undoubting faith in your will.*

By James Bender



Holy Saturday, April 16th

## **"Baptized into Death and Resurrection"**

Romans 6:3-6

For many years baptism was understood as a form of "fire insurance" protecting the baptized from the fires of hell. That is not what Paul says here in Romans. Paul tells those in Rome the baptized have been baptized into the death and resurrection of Christ. We are pretty big on the resurrection part, but too often forget that to be resurrected, one has first to die. We are baptized into the life of Jesus including death and resurrection. We are to die to sin so that new life might emerge.

Every morning when we stare into the mirror to shave, comb our hair, or apply makeup, we ought to ask ourselves this question: "What does it mean for me to be a baptized Christian today in the people, tasks and world that I will encounter today?" That could involve situations where we need to give of ourselves as well as opportunities to experience God's grace in the day ahead. It could involve the death of some part of ourselves so that new life might emerge.

Baptism involves promises. Parents, sponsors, and the congregation make pledges about the one being baptized. The most important promise in baptism is that made by God as in the waters of baptism God publicly claims the newly baptized as God's own. Promises made by us humans waver. The promise of baptism of which you and I can be certain is the promise of God. It will not waver but hold fast. Trusting this God's baptized people can enter into the death and resurrection of Christ with great hope. We don't need fire insurance. God has claimed us and made us God's own. That is enough for any of life's trials and fires.

*Prayer: Thank you God for claiming me in baptism. Thank you for uniting me with Christ in both death and resurrection so the old me is constantly dying and being made new. Amen*

By Pastor Gary McCluskey

Easter Sunday, April 17th

Alleluia! Christ is Risen!

*I know that my Redeemer lives!  
What comfort this sweet sentence gives!  
He lives, he lives, who once was dead;  
he lives, my everliving head!*

*He lives triumphant from the grave;  
he lives eternally to save;  
he lives all-glorious in the sky;  
he lives exalted there on high.*

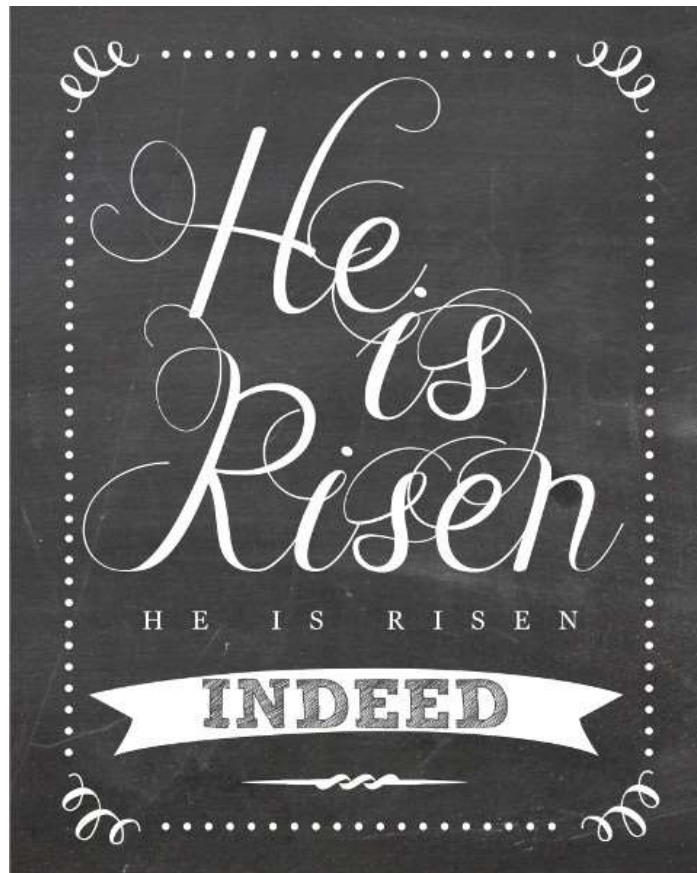
*He lives and grants me daily breath;  
he lives, and I shall conquer death;  
he lives my mansion to prepare;  
he lives to bring me safely there.*

*He lives, all glory to his name!  
He lives, my Savior, still the same.  
Oh, the sweet joy this sentence gives:  
I know that my Redeemer lives!*

– Samuel Medley, 1775, excerpt from hymn “*I Know that My Redeemer Lives*”

Join us for worship, in-person or online! See [www.ulctempe.org](http://www.ulctempe.org) for service times and our livestream link.

*Join us for Easter Sunday, April 17<sup>th</sup>  
6:00 am Sunrise Service (outdoor)  
10:30 am Service*



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