

# Lenten Devotionals 2019 Anniversary Edition

## Lent

Early in the history of the Christian Church, believers held certain days and seasons as sacred. Easter, the day of rejoicing was preceded by a fast. In the fourth Century, the forty days before Easter became common as a period of special observance. The word "Lent" comes from an Old English word LENCEN which meant spring time. The season originated as one of spiritual preparation for Easter.

In this 150th Anniversary edition of the Lenten Devotionals you will find devotionals from previous Lenten Devotionals provided by members during the 1980's and 1990's as well as new Devotionals provided by members during 2019.

May this Devotional booklet help prepare you for a deeper and more meaningful celebration of Easter.

*Adapted from Angus Shaw, 1988*



### ***The Touch of Faith***

“Jesus turned around in the crowd and said, ‘Who touched My garments?’ and His disciples said to Him, ‘You see this multitude pressing on You, and You say, ‘Who touched Me?’” (Mark 5:30 –31).

This little woman who ventured to touch the cloak of the Lord and was miraculously healed was scarcely the only person in that mob in need of healing and relief. But she from all the rest reached out to touch the Lord and in so doing became the recipient of the Master’s presence and power. There was something unique in this touch.

The touch of this anonymous person in a crowd halted the Lord Jesus in his tracks. The Lord of Glory stopped and helped because this sick and nameless woman reached out to touch Him.

Peter Marshall wrote: “How Can I Touch Christ?” In answer he suggested:

- Give God a chance. Bring your problem, your need to Him and tell Him all about it, just as if He did not know.
- Believe that the Lord hears you and cares about you. Be ever reminded of His loving care as you look at Calvary. Be reminded that He suffered because of His love for us, corporately and individually.
- Be willing to wait patiently for the Lord, He in His wisdom and time will provide.

May these Lenten Devotionals encourage our will to reach and ability to touch our Lord. As He walks among us, reach out your faith; touch Him. He will not ask, “Who touched me?” He will know. He calls us by name.

### ***Giving Up Items for Lent***

Read: 2 Corinthians 8:8-9 and Matthew 4:1-11. Key Verse: 2 Corinthians 8:9

“Rich as He was, He made Himself poor for your sake, in order to make you rich by means of His poverty.”

Lent commemorates the forty days Jesus fasted in the desert and resisted three temptations of the Devil. Lent also prepares us for Good Friday and Easter. I grew up in Wisconsin where one-third of the people are Catholic; another third, Lutheran. A number of my friends gave up a favorite item for Lent, candy, dessert, or an enjoyable activity. Most of them didn't discuss why they were giving up a cherished item. Perhaps a parent, priest, or minister asked them to do it. It may have been family tradition. Thoughtfully done, however, this custom can be a beautiful way to commemorate the Lenten Season.

First, giving up a treasured item reminds us that Jesus gave up heaven to show us God’s love. Second, giving up a treasured item reminds us how Jesus willingly gave up His earthly life. At an early age He submitted to a cruel death to win us salvation and freedom from the bondage of sin. Third, giving up a treasured item reminds us how Jesus defeated the Devil and how we must, too— by giving up moment by moment the control of our life to God. Fourth, giving up a treasured item reminds us that we show our gratitude to the Savior through the giving of ourselves in service to God and humanity.

Prayer: Father, remembering all our Savior gave up for us, help us be among those who put You and others first and ourselves last, the true pattern of Lent and of our faith, Amen.

Valerie Schneider

1995

Thursday March 7, 2019

### ***Getting Dirty***

Read: Matthew 25:34-40. Key Verse: Matthew 25:40 "Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine even the least of these, you did it to Me."

Most of us are greatly blessed. We have a home, food, clothes, and people who love us. But we are aware of those in the world, in our country, in our city, who must go without these necessities. This scripture tells us to help them, the ones Christ instructed us to care for in His name. It is easy to ignore those less fortunate. We do it every day. It is much easier to give money to our church or a social service organization and say, "You deal with these people." But these are the very people Christ lived and worked among. We call ourselves "Christians", those like Christ. Our Lord was willing to touch and heal a leper, but we will find whatever means of escape available to avoid even talking with those we consider to be "undesirable".

Today, and every day, reach out to someone in need. It may be a homeless family, a person on the street who is hungry, a child who doesn't have a winter coat, or someone you work with who is lonely. Don't just talk about how God loves them; show them in some physical way what it means to be a Christian. Be God's instrument in someone's life.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, grant us the ability to overcome our weaknesses and help others. Make us more like You in caring, that one day You can say to us, "Well done, good and faithful servant," In Christ's name, Amen.

Ted Essick

1991

*He is Risen Indeed*

Friday March 8, 2019

### ***Praying Always***

Read: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18. Key Verse: 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18 "Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks."

Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians to commend the faithful brethren for their dedication to Christ and to one another, and to encourage them to further progress in love and holiness. What better way can we as Christians today grow in love and holiness than to be in constant prayer with our Lord? Most Christians find it easy to seek God's guidance in important issues and decisions in our daily walk, but do we turn smaller decisions over to Him also? Do we give thanks for all of His answers, even if they are not the answers we were hoping to hear?

When bad things happen to faithful Christian believers, we do have difficulty coming to terms with being grateful and thankful; but, we must remember that we do not see the completed plan God has for our lives.

With practice, patience, and faith, we can be truly thankful for all the circumstances of our lives; and through constant prayer, we can grow in love and holiness.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, help us as we seek, through our prayers, to draw near You. Help us to bow our wills to You and to yield our spirits to the influence of Your Holy Spirit. Help us to grow in faith and trust that You are in complete control of our lives. We thank You, Lord for listening to our every prayer, Amen.

Chip and Ann Herndon

1991

*He is Risen*

Saturday March 9, 2019

***Renewing the Covenant***

Read: Joshua 24:1-24. Key Verse: Joshua 24:1 “and they presented themselves before God”

As Christians we have said a clear yes to God’s offer of grace through our Lord Jesus Christ. But because we’ve said yes once doesn’t mean we are through. We must say yes to God’s will again and again; when we pray, decide how to spend our money or time, enter a voting booth, or respond to a person in need. Each instance is an opportunity to renew our promise to God. To keep letting God enter our lives and mold us into His image.

For most of us, becoming a committed Christian takes a lifetime of response and responsibility. We are never too faithful, too mature, too spiritual not to need to say yes. When you think about it, one of the purposes of Sunday morning worship is to gather like the tribes of Israel at Schechem. We gather to tell the story, to remember who we are and renew our covenant with God. Without this periodic weekly renewal we wouldn’t come face to face with the demands of God upon our lives. We might forget who we are. We might answer to some other name, follow some alien god.

So it is important to keep yoking ourselves to our true living God, to keep telling the story of our deliverance, choosing whom we shall serve, renewing our covenant.

Prayer: Our Father, we thank You for Your Word and for every bit of new understanding You give us. As we strive to serve You, may we pattern our lives after that of the Lord Jesus in whose name we pray, Amen.

Helen Beeson

1991

*He is Risen Indeed*

Sunday March 10, 2019

***Walking with the Lord***

Verse: Psalms 23:1-2 “The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside quiet waters.”

We should want to walk with the Lord. I get excited when we walk along beside the river and see how it flows so hard over rocks and makes such a beautiful sound, yet when it gets deep it is so very quiet. You can almost hear the Lord speaking.

What a wonderful way to start a New Year, with new experiences and even some new adventures like, making new friends; seeking new ways to serve the Lord so we can be more like Him. We need to embrace new things, but first, we need to get rid of some of the old. Like old habits that can compromise our walk with Jesus. Let’s be honest, guilt of things I didn’t do or things I should have done. Doubts that I can’t do what I should do. Regrets over past failures, just trust the Lord Jesus to lead in all matters. He knows our very thoughts.

He will walk beside the still waters with me because He loves me and when I ask Him, He forgives me. The more I walk with Him, the more He leads me into new life and I am more like Jesus.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, show us what we need to throw out, so we can be more like You and enjoy all the wonderful blessings You send upon us each day, in Jesus ‘s name, Amen.

Florence McCray

2019

*He is Risen*

Monday March 11, 2019

### ***I've Got This***

Verse: Genesis 33:4 "But Esau ran to meet him and embraced him and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept."

It seems God well knows the tendency of His children to depend upon their own strength in navigating life and the Bible is full of stories where this tendency leads to a spiritual detour. For example, Abraham's and Sarah's determination to assure a line of descendants, resulted in the birth of Ishmael and forever changed history, setting the stage for ongoing ethnic conflict. Rebekah and Jacob's plot to steal Esau's birthright ended in loss of brotherly love, and Jacob's guilt and fear until Esau granted him forgiveness many years later.

In my life, where I am distanced from personal hunger, cold, insecurity and poor health, it is easy to believe "I've got this." However, God calls you and me to walk closely with Him because His path for us will involve hard times. I crave a life of ease and He calls me to a life of sacrifice – of time, of money, of belongings, of recognition, of comfort, and the list could go on. Let's all stay close to Him through daily prayer, community worship, Bible study, fellowship and sharing the Good News, so that in both times of lack and times of plenty we will be in His presence, doing His will.

Prayer: Father, thank You for Your promises to provide direction for me and the freedom to seek it. Help me with my fear of the adventures You may lead me through and to always hold tightly to You. In Christ, Amen.

Pam Smith

2019

*He is Risen Indeed*

Tuesday March 12, 2019

### ***Promises, Promises***

Read: Matthew 28:18-20. Key Verse: Matthew 28:20 "and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

The Bible sets forth the history of the children of Israel replete with examples of their failure to obey God and their failure to keep their part of a covenant. Today mankind is beset with the same frailties. While a man's word was once considered his bond, man's word is now often questioned. Our lack of confidence in our fellow man has led to the expression, "promises, promises", implying doubt as to the credibility of the speaker.

Much has been written of the "credibility gap"; there are numerous examples of trust that has been compromised. We question our leaders in business, in government and in courts of justice; even among family members in the home there is distrust. Doubts arise, and in despair people ask, "Who can we believe?"

One answer comes through clearly and forcefully: Believe God. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. He is credible; He has promised: "whosoever is sufficient for you...call to Me and I will answer...and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Prayer: Lord, grant us the faith to accept Your promises and to trust Your Word, Amen.

Dick Beeson

1986

*He is Risen*

Wednesday March 13, 2019

### ***A Head Start***

Verse: Proverbs 22:6 “Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.”

I was blessed by the Lord to be able to teach kindergarten in the Johnson City public schools for more than fifty years. I never got tired of working with young children, although I have to admit that some of their parents could be trying at times. Jesus taught his disciples, “Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3), which is probably why I am eagerly looking forward to my second childhood.

I began teaching in 1962, the year the U.S. Supreme Court ruled it was unlawful for schools and teachers to encourage children to pray. Teachers were no longer permitted to recite with their students before lunch or snack time: “God is great, God is good, let us thank Him for this food. By His hands we must be fed, give us this day our daily bread. Amen.” Although the U.S. Supreme Court told us we could not pray aloud in school, it certainly couldn’t keep us from praying privately for our students. Now, at the age of 90, I know God heard every one of my prayers each time a former student comes up to me to simply say, “Hello, remember me?” or to tell me that he or she is now teaching.

**Prayer:** Dear Heavenly Father, watch over our children. Bless them. And allow each of us to grow closer to You as we age. We ask this in Jesus’ name, Amen.

Joan Swingle

2019

*He is Risen Indeed*

Thursday March 14, 2019

### ***Stumbling into the Presence of God***

Verse: Hebrews 4:16 “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

The great preacher C. H. Spurgeon comments, “...when we pray, we are standing in the palace, on the glittering floor of the great King’s own reception room....” May we hold that thought, that humbling image? Would we, should we not find our knees shaking? Coming before the throne of grace in praise and joy perhaps our exuberance may lessen our quaking. Even then an honest appraisal may remind us how often we offer trite, tight words.

Spurgeon goes on to say, when we pray we are on “vantage ground,” a place, an invitation, an opportunity made available to us by the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Distance between us ordinary people and the holy place behind the Old Testament curtain was obliterated. We are standing, kneeling, even being prostrate on that “glittering floor,” that “vantage ground” as angels surround. Come boldly?

So when is it when we most yearn to speak with our Father? Anger, hurt, worry, frustrations burn. Thoughts churn as troubled situations bend less to resolution in the name of Jesus. Sins’ terms have taken their toll. Mental and physical infirmities go beyond gentle concern. Our voice, our balance is no longer firm. Come boldly?

That word, *boldly*, in the Greek is *parrhesia*. It denotes the freedom of speech. Ah, we come before the throne with worship, reverence and awe, anything but cockiness, yet we can speak freely, confidently because Jesus knows all about us. Our Lord knows all sins, situations, difficulties, needs. He responds— with grace, mercy and help. Amen!

Prayer: Father, we come to You in the name of Jesus, stumbling in our brokenness yet believing, boldly, in the wholeness of Your love for us. We rise again, standing on Your promises.

Jackie Kossin, 2019

*He is Risen*

Friday March 15, 2019

### ***God Will Pardon All***

Read: Isaiah 55:6-9. Key Verse: Isaiah 55:7 "For He will abundantly pardon."

Each of us has heard the above phrase repeated over and over many times in song or sermon. What does it mean to you? To me, it means that God is willing to pardon over and over our many transgressions, and also that He will pardon any sin, no matter how great it is. And who is to say what is the greater sin? For example, adultery or malicious gossip, which is the greater sin in God's eyes? We do not know, at least for the present, but we could be surprised. See verses 8 and 9: "for my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your thoughts."

This we do know. He will abundantly pardon any and all. That is why Jesus appeared on earth, to be our Mediator, our High Priest if we are sorry enough to confess and to change. "Forgive them, Father, for they know not what they do" were among the last words He said before He died on the cross.

Prayer: Our Father, we come into Your presence with hearts full of thanksgiving for Your pardon of our sins. We thank You for this promise. Help us in the cross to see the lengths to which Your love will go, that You did love us so much that You keep nothing back. Help us in the cross to see the horror of our sins, and to depart from them. Help us in the cross to see the wonder of Your love, and to surrender forever to it. This we ask in Christ's name, Amen.

Lewis and Pat Cosby

1988

*He is Risen Indeed*

Saturday March 16, 2019

### ***Humility***

Verse: Romans 12:14 "Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. "

Try to have the same concern for everyone, do not be proud, but accept humble duties. Do not think of yourself as wise. Better to keep a closed mouth and an open ear. The Bible tells us to give others an opportunity to speak. Try not to be negative about anything. We should be humbled by the enormity of God; how can we feel self-important. Yet God tells us he knows every hair on our head, and he cares for all of us. We need to be humble before there is any honor for us.

Prayer for Humility/ William Barkley:

O Father, give us the humility which realizes its ignorance, admits its mistakes, recognizes its need, welcomes advice, accepts rebuke. Help us always to praise rather than criticize, to sympathize rather than to discourage, to build rather than to destroy, and to think of people at their best rather than their worst.

This we ask for thy Name's sake, Amen.

Bill Brent

Christ Care Group, 2019

*He is Risen*

Sunday March 17, 2019

### ***The Lord will Provide***

Read: Mark 8:14-21. Key Verse: Mark 8:21 "...Do you not yet understand?"

In our world today, we measure one's success by the worldly goods one has accumulated. We must drive bigger cars, live in bigger houses, stockpile more money in order to deem ourselves a success.

God tells us to "Beware the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod". The disciples took this to mean that they had no bread for their journey from Dalmanutha. Jesus said, "Do ye not yet understand? Do not worry about food, or water, or clothing. I will provide all these things for you. Did I not feed the five thousand, and also the four thousand?" We must learn to trust in Jesus that He will furnish all that we need that is important in this world. As God provided us eyes, let us see, and ears, let us hear and understand that a truly rich and successful person in this world is one who is at peace with the Lord and has good health, peace of mind and a few good friends.

As each of us seeks God's will in our lives, we must understand that He will provide all that we will need on our journey.

Prayer: Dear Lord, help us to finally understand that if we make You the center of our lives we can at last be truly successful in this world and the one to come. Help us in our daily struggle to focus on You as the only provider of the important things that we need to accomplish Your will, Amen.

Wayne, Mary Margaret, Leigh Wayne, & Shannon Miller

1986

*He is Risen Indeed*

Monday March 18, 2019

### ***Lifting the Spirit***

Read: Psalm 121. Key Verse: Psalm 121:1-2 "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth"

Some of us who are strongly attached to the mountains of East Tennessee are inclined to interpret the word "hills" as used in Psalm 121 to mean "mountains". With that word we emphasize the characteristics of formidable, permanent, secure, overlooking, protective, unshakable, inspiring, reassuring, etc. Also, as the verse says, in recognizing God as Creator of all things including the mountains, we can associate Him as being nearby or amongst those very mountains.

We suggest that to lift our eyes effectively requires a lifting of the spirit, a climbing with focus on the top, travel which entails exercise, repeated effort, climbing practice and the reward of closer proximity to God.

The psalmist was supposedly living through turbulent times, as are we. He calls upon his own soul and other souls to look to the keeping and never-failing power which is adequate for all needs and conditions, the resource which is available to all men. He knows the answer lies in Him who made heaven and earth.

Prayer: Father, forgive us for undue self-reliance. Help us to daily look up and climb with our souls. May we rely on Your strength and guidance. May we draw closer to You in the hills. Amen

Betty and Dorman Stout

1986

*He is Risen*

Tuesday March 19, 2019

### ***God's Garden***

Read: John 15:5-8. Key Verse: John 15:8 "In this is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples."

Do you feel it? Can you smell it? Spring is in the air with all the promises it brings to this not-so-great gardener. Should I expand my perennial flower garden? Should I try new offerings from my winter deluge of seed-bulb plant catalogs? My selections are made; my order is in; my package arrives. How tiny is the seed for the most beautiful flower! Will this tiny seed really bring as much delight to the eye as the packet promised? With faith I plant, and with love I tend, until I am rewarded with the joy of the bloom. So God does for us. Jesus Christ was God's gift to us that the seed of His love might sprout and grow in our hearts. When we bloom as a Child of God and bring joy to others, we are flowers in God's garden. Let us rejoice!

The Lord is my gardener; I shall not wither.

He makes me to sprout when I'd otherwise stay dormant.

He makes me to grow.

Surely I shall live my life praising Him for His faith in my promise:

To be the best I can be for Him!

Prayer: We praise You, Our Lord, for Your most special gift to us. Help us to recognize and seize opportunities to bloom where You've placed us! Amen.

Ann Mooneyhan

1992

*He is Risen Indeed*

Wednesday March 20, 2019

### ***Trust God***

Verse: Joshua 6:1,2 "Now, the gates of Jericho were securely barred because of the Israelites. No one went out and no one came in."

Even when God tells you to do something you think is impossible, and doesn't tell you exactly how to do it, Trust God. Imagine you are listening in on the conversation between God and Joshua. As you look down on Jericho you can see the 50 ft high walls that are 15 ft thick and such massive gates; impenetrable, unscalable, unconquerable. Then God tells you go take Jericho, it has been given to you. Joshua speaks: *Uh, God, you do realize there is no way we can take the city, the walls are too high. Besides there is not enough wood around to build scaffolding or ladders. Even if there were enough wood, who wants to climb up a 50 ft ladder with people shooting down at you!* God speaks and says: *Walk around the city 1 time each day for 6 days, then on the 7<sup>th</sup> day walk around it 7 times, and then stop and shout as loud as you can.*

Now you have to admit it sounds ridiculous,.... What? Are we going to scare them so badly they will open the doors and come running out? It may sound ridiculous or impossible, but remember, it is God talking. Nothing is impossible, and if you don't do it, you will probably miss out seeing a HUGE miracle!

Running a small business is hard, exciting, fun, and scary. Many times, I had no idea how we would have enough money to make payroll. I prayed a lot and came closer to God. Why? Because we had to depend upon God each day. We had to depend on God to provide: work, people to do the work, and customers to pay their bills. Yet, each day God provided what we needed. Some days, (many days) God provided at the last possible moment. Why did He wait? I believe it was to prove to me that He was in charge, it was not a coincidence or that it just happened because of my efforts.

I believe God's final words to Joshua as he left the meeting with God was: Trust me.... Do your part and I will do my part...and be ready! Are you ready? Do your part and God will do His.

Chick Spears Christ Care Group, 2019

*He is Risen*

Thursday March 21, 2019

### **Worry**

Verse: Matthew 5:34 “Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, because tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

I believe our minds are programmed to worry. Worry leads to stress and that is a very serious condition. At different times in our lives we have different things to worry about. With young children we worry about health and safety. Teenagers can give parents a lot to worry about. I can recall many nights I would lie in bed and worry about many situations that could put my boys in harm's way. By the way, none of those things ever happened and I just lost a lot of sleep. My family thinks I worry too much. It is not an easy habit to break. It took a long time for me to accept God's Word about worry and turn that over to Him. It allows me to live a more peaceful life.

Prayer: Dear Lord, thank You for Your Word. Help me always to remember that You are in charge and I just need to follow Your lead and You will bring peace to my life.

Jerry Urse, 2019

### **Fear vs. Faith**

When my wife died, we had been married 63 years. We were so thankful to have been able to keep her at home the entire time including months of Hospice care. Our congregation and many outside our church were so supportive. However, toward the end especially, I felt the uncertainty of how long she would live, and would we be able to continue keeping her at home. At times I allowed that uncertainty to become fear. But, somehow, I was drawn to Matthew 8:26 “You of little faith, why are you so afraid?”

That challenge moved me closer to peace in the confidence that all is well – God is still in charge. Our faith must rely on that trust.

Prayer: Gracious and ever-loving God, thank You for Your provision and control. Forgive our weak faith. Enable us with stronger faith to rest in that trust.

Dorman Stout, 2019

*He is Risen Indeed*

Friday March 22, 2019

### **Bearing One Another's Burdens**

Read: Galatians 6:1-5. Key Verse: Galatians 6:2 “Carry each other's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ.”

“I've got problems of my own to worry about.” “That's his/her problem.” “I don't want to get involved.” Chances are we've all said or thought these things; yet, as Christians, we are admonished not only to love one another, (John 12:34) but as a manifestation of our love for Christ to carry one another's burdens. This does not mean we must solve every problem or run constant interference in the lives of family and friends (for we are further instructed that “each one should carry his own load”), but it does not mean that we are to shoulder “the excess burdens that we need to share with one another.” (Ryrie Study Bible)

No matter how trouble-free others' lives may appear, there are few people who do not have some special concern or “excess burden” that weighs heavily on their heart and is easier to bear if shared. We, as fellow members of the highest “fraternity” of all, the body of Christ, are both privileged and obligated to offer compassion, caring and encouragement in words and actions to those around us. Are you “fulfilling the law of Christ” by carrying others' burdens? Jesus said, “...whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.” (Matthew 25:45)

Prayer: Our most gracious and loving Heavenly Father, we ask that You who carries us through the troubled times of our lives would help us to carry the burdens of others, that they might be encouraged in life and see the love of Christ in us. Thank You, Lord; in Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Joann Miller

1990

*He is Risen*

Saturday March 23, 2019

### ***The Breakers of the Loaf***

Read: John 6:30-37. Key Verse: John 6:35 "Jesus said unto them, 'I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth in me shall never thirst'."

The day after the crowd had satisfied their hunger on the fishes and bread that Jesus had miraculously provided, Jesus seized the opportunity to teach the people that life consisted of more than satisfaction over physical needs. He introduced them to their need for the "the Bread of Life."

Jesus evidently chose to figuratively portray himself as "the Bread of Life" because bread was considered almost sacred by the middle eastern culture of his day. One historian has noted that three out of four people who lived in that area subsisted totally on bread or other foods made from grain.

To cut bread with a knife would have been thought of as cutting life itself. Thus, they chose to break bread into pieces with their fingers. Jesus underscored the importance of bread when he taught his disciples to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread".

Jesus' self-revelation as "the Bread of Life" has serious implications for the church. As the "Body of Christ" the church is intended to be the means through which the world receives spiritual nourishment from God. The individual church member thus must assume the task that even the angels of Heaven cannot do...that is, become the "breakers of the loaf" of "the Bread of Life" to feed those who are spiritually hungry.

Prayer: Father, forgive us if we have failed to realize that confession of our faith is not enough, and that in order to have a more perfect union with Thee, our faith must be translated into action. We too must do our share in the breaking of "the Bread of Life."

Sidney Smallwood, 1990

*He is Risen Indeed*

Sunday March 24, 2019

### ***Kindness***

Read: 2 Peter 1:3-9. Key Verse: 2 Peter 1:7 "And to Godliness, brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness, love "

Today we seem to be bombarded with news of discord: angry harsh words, critical of others. Hate filled statements seem to abound. What can we do as followers of Jesus Christ?

Matthew 5:43 "Love your enemies.... Pray for them that persecute you." Prayer may not change them, but it changes us and our attitude. 'Love IS patient, love IS KIND'.

Mr. Rodgers says: "the 3 ways to ultimate success are :1 be kind, 2: be kind , and 3: be kind!"

Jesus showed us how to be kind: the wedding at Cana; dealing with Zacchaeus; the bleeding woman. Max Lucado said "I choose kindness! I will be kind to the poor, for they are alone; kind to the rich, they are afraid; and kind to the unkind, for such is how GOD treated me."

1 Peter 3:8-9 "finally all of you live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called."

Humility is a prerequisite for being wise! And love is an active noun! To love someone is to try to accept them as they are right now!

Let us focus on what we have in common... and be kind whenever it is possible...for it always is!

Prayer: Dear Lord ,touch our hearts, listening ears, and watchful eyes, so that we may have kind thoughts, kind words & kind actions. In Your name we pray, Amen.

Betsy Beaver, 2019

*He is Risen*

Monday March 25, 2019

### ***Walk in the Light***

Read: Psalm 119:105-112. Key Verse: Psalm 119:105 “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.”

Darkness can be a scary thing. The word of God, to the Psalmist, shed the light needed to quiet that fear and to show the way.

A highlight of a hike through Mammoth Cave comes when the hikers are deep into the cave and the guide instructs the hiker to find a seat and then turns off all the lights. Hikers are warned not to move around in the darkness because of the dangers. There is absolutely no light! Even the few minutes that normally would allow you to see in the dark don't help, for the lights of the outside world do not penetrate that deep into the cave. It is an eerie experience.

The New Testament tells us that “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” Jesus himself said, “I am the light of the world.” He showed the way, not only for our earthly paths, but the way to eternal life.

Sin is often compared to darkness. In John 1 1:5-7, we read, “And this is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His son, cleanses us from all sin.”

Jesus Christ's presence with us is the light we need to find our way now and throughout eternity.

Prayer: Father, keep us in Thy light and lead us where You would have us go. Amen.

Perrin T. Croy, 1990

*He is Risen Indeed*

Tuesday March 26, 2019

### ***Give Your Gifts Freely***

Read: Genesis 4:3-7. Key Verse: Genesis 4:7 “If you do well, will you not be accepted?”

As Christians, our main goal is to be more like Christ. Giving freely of ourselves, our time, and our money should come easy, but does it? How many times have we said “no” to someone who needed our help, or driven by a stranded motorist when it was obvious someone needed us? In this fast-paced world, people are being forced to live on the street, go without eating and even dying of loneliness. As Brothers and Sisters in Christ, let's slow down and see whom we're missing. Our Heavenly Father accepts only freely-given gifts, not gifts that are half-hearted or given with a grudge. Let's all make an effort to “reach out and touch someone” who needs our loving hand.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help us to find the time and give freely of ourselves that we might glorify Thee and Your Son Jesus Christ whom You gave for all, Amen.

Lanny and Beth Bodkins

1988

*He is Risen*

Wednesday March 27, 2019

### ***Assurance of Love***

Read: Romans 8:31-39. Key Verse: Romans 8:31 "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?"

Often, the troubles of the world tend to catch up with us, and we seek an assurance that all is not lost, nor have we been forsaken. What better assurance exists for a Christian than the realization that "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

We can feel secure knowing that since God gave His son for us, he will surely provide us with everything we need. Also, we can experience a true peace of mind knowing that Jesus himself will intercede for us in heaven. We can take comfort in knowing that no matter what tribulation or distress befalls us, we are not separated from the love of Christ. In the end, through Him, overwhelming victory is ours. In fact, neither death nor life, present nor past, nor any power can separate us from the love of Christ which is so graciously given to us.

So, let us be comforted and assured by this promise of love which comes from our Heavenly Father, and let us share the news of His love with others.

Prayer: Our Father, we are truly grateful for the assurance You have given us of Your love. We pray that no matter what befalls us, we will remain mindful that we can strive to share His love with others through our actions and our words. In Christ's name, Amen.

David Saulsbury

1990

*He is Risen Indeed*

Thursday March 28, 2019

### ***Peace for the World***

Read: John 11:16-30. Key Verse: John 14:27 "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

If it wasn't for the Prince of Peace we would all go to Hell. That's why God sent His son as the Prince of Peace to die for all our sins so that we would have a more peaceful world. But everyone is still fighting; there is not much peace in the world today. I suppose that means no one cared that God sent His son to die on the cross to save us from going to Hell. People today ignore the fact that Jesus died on the cross for us, so they continue to fight.

Just as Christians, should try to convince people that Jesus, The Prince of Peace, wanted us to be at peace and love one another, so we should be more at peace, considering what Jesus sacrificed for us, which was His life. Because no one in the history of mankind would ever sacrifice their life for everyone in the world to go to Heaven. But Jesus did. All He wants from us in return is to be at peace and love one another. If you think about it, is it really that hard? Yes, for us today it is very hard. But for the Lord's sake we should do our best. God knows that the only person that will ever be perfect is His son. He just wants us to try and teach others to be at peace and love one another.

Prayer: Dear God, please help everyone in this world to be more at peace with one another. Help us remember that Jesus died on the cross for us, to give us ways to have peace. Amen.

Trisha McCalmont

Age 13, 1994

*He is Risen*

Friday March 29, 2019

### ***Great is Her Faithfulness***

Read: Proverbs 31. Key Verse: Proverbs 31:30 "Favor is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord shall be praised."

Today's text contains a beautiful description of a woman who honors God in her life. Indeed, Biblical women were recorded as examples to all of us of Godly principles by which to live. So, may we...

Like Deborah, boldly face our enemy knowing that we have access to the whole armor of God.

Like Hannah, pray fervently for our children and dedicate them completely to God.

Like Naomi, encourage the younger women of faith to reach out and stretch their spiritual wings to accomplish God's purposes.

Like Ruth, support widows and those bereft of family with our presence, love, and hospitality.

Like Anna, pause during our busy lives to offer up the sacrifice of praise to our Redeemer and to adore Him.

Like the woman at the well, marvel at the omniscience of Jesus and rejoice that no matter what our past, in Christ we are a new creature.

Like Mary of Bethany, take time to spiritually sit at Jesus' feet and be fed that which will nourish our souls.

Like the woman who touched the hem of Jesus' garment, make every effort to stay close to our Master.

Prayer: Precious Lord, may we walk worthy of our calling in Christ Jesus by not only emulating the examples You so carefully provided us in Your Word, but by striving daily to attain the highest ideal of Christlikeness. Amen.

Lisa Smalling 1995

*He is Risen Indeed*

Saturday March 30, 2019

### ***Seeing is Believing***

Read: John 20:24-27. Key Verse: John 20:27 "Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; look, here are my hands. Give me your hand; put it into my side. Doubt no longer but believe'."

Thomas came to Jesus like a skeptic from the twentieth century. He did not believe the reports from the others who had seen Jesus. He wanted proof; he needed "evidence from the crime scene." When Jesus confronted the stunned disciple, He did not quote from the scriptures; nor did He give him a watertight argument on the fulfillment of the law and prophets. Instead he said to Thomas, "Put your hand into my wound and you will know who I am." Jesus' wounds mark him; they identify him as the suffering Savior. Like Thomas, we are invited to examine them; we are invited to share in Christ's suffering. In so doing, we are invited to believe in Christ's resurrection, to accept it as an assurance of our own resurrection. We will see Him again when He comes in great glory to separate the sheep from the goats, and I often wonder if He will bear the scars from His wounds.

Prayer: Father, we praise You for Your atoning love. We confess that our lives are not what they should be. Instead of walking in light of Your redemption, we are mired in our sins. But in confession we find Your promise of forgiveness. Thank you Lord, and help us spread that news to others. Amen.

Robert Wondergem

1995

*He is Risen*

Sunday March 31, 2019

### ***Too Much Trouble?***

Read: John 10:10-16. Key Verse: John 10:11 "I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."

I have always wanted to have a soft, cuddly sheep. But everyone says, "they will eat your garden. They smell, they are stubborn, and are very dumb" TOO MUCH TROUBLE. Yet, I dream of spinning wool, dyeing it with natural colors, and weaving it into the most beautiful cloth; and never having to mow the grass again!

The Bible often refers to sheep and shepherds:

Jesus our sacrificial lamb

Lamb of God – innocent and perfect

Jesus the good shepherd – giving his life for the life of his sheep, finding the one lost, constantly leading and tenderly caring

"I know my sheep and my sheep know me." He hears each bleat and knows from which of His sheep it comes. We are just like the sheep of my dreams and He knows our very being. Yet Jesus sacrificed His all for us; knowing and caring for our every need – not giving up because we are ...TOO MUCH TROUBLE. He loves us while we are dirty and matted, and because He cares, our empty lives are changed to overflowing, beautiful ones.

Prayer: Thank you Lord Jesus for being my good shepherd. Watch over me, find me when I stray, and guide me in all that I do. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Dick and Betsy Beaver

1988

*He is Risen Indeed*

Monday April 1, 2019

### ***Kindness Overcomes Sorrow***

Key Verse: Ruth 1:16 "For where you go I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people will be my people and your God my God."

In this world of many sorrows we are strengthened by the love and concern of others. Christians in the faith, for how can we survive without each other. Loyalty to our faith and to our friends will sustain us. Even though we are sad we have hope in a bright tomorrow. We can find joy in a friend. We are called to share our lives with one another. How can we be of comfort as Ruth was to Naomi (a poor widow)?

What can we do to make this world, country, and our neighborhood a better place? How can we serve? Jesus tells us to share our lives with others, to have compassion for the least of men. As we share with one another, we can be assured of greater life. As an added benefit, we find great joy in serving others.

Prayer: Our Heavenly Father we thank You for many blessings, especially our Christian friends. Help us to share with others, not only material things but also Your Word and Your assurance of everlasting life with You. Amen

Jean Brent

Christ Care Group

2019

*He is Risen*

Tuesday April 2, 2019

### ***The Love of God***

Key Verse: John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Many great men and women have their favorite texts, but this text has been called "Everybody's Text". Herein for every simple heart is the very essence of the gospel.

In this 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter of the Book of John, we see Jesus talking with a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus. Nicodemus had seen the miracles performed by our Lord and accepted them as proof that this man, Jesus, was a teacher sent from God. We can be thankful that because of Nicodemus' persistence we have the record of Jesus' answers to him including this sublime statement of the love of God.

This text tells us certain very great things:

- That the origin and initiative in all salvation lies with God.
- That the mainspring of the being of God is love.
- That there is a wideness in God's love.

God loves the unlovable and the unlovely, the lonely who have no one else to love them, the person who loves God and the person who never thinks of God. It was the world that God loved. As Augustine had it: "God loves each one of us as if there were only one of us to love."

Prayer: O God our Father, give us such a new awareness and appreciation of Your great love for all humankind that we will be willing to spend the rest of our lives in humble gratitude and service. In the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ we pray, Amen.

Mary Wood

1988

*He is Risen Indeed*

Wednesday April 3, 2019

### ***The Second Great Commandment***

Read: Mark 12:28-31. Key Verse: Mark 12:31 "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Love for God and love for our fellowmen go hand in hand. It is our love for God that leads us to love others because if we love Him we will also love those whom He loves.

In Romans 13, the Apostle Paul indicated that our love of God can best be demonstrated through acts of love toward other people. The Scriptures emphasize this truth in several places. Jesus taught that by serving others in Christian compassion, we serve Him. "And I, the King, will tell them 'When you did it to these my brothers you were doing it to me.' And again, He says that "whoever receives a little child in my name receives me." The Apostle John tells us that God is the source of the love we have toward others and that a man cannot truly love God unless he loves his brother. And Jesus makes plain that any lack of love toward a brother can stand as a barrier between ourselves and God making true worship possible.

The outstanding illustration of "love thy neighbor" is the story of the Good Samaritan. He did not know the man in the ditch. There is nothing in the story to suggest that he liked the man. He saw the man, and in compassion he helped him.

Let us remember the words of Jesus: "Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these you have done it unto Me."

Prayer: Father, teach us to love. Help us to live like Jesus who went about doing good and laid down His life for others. In His name, Amen.

Helen Beeson

1990

*He is Risen*

Thursday April 4, 2019

### ***A Contented Christian***

Read 1 Timothy 6: 6-12. Key Verse: 1 Timothy 6:6 “But godliness with contentment is great gain.”

When Paul wrote the words of our key verse, he had experienced great deprivation and suffering as a result of his faith. Yet he had learned the secret of contentment.

Today we as Christians, often let chronic dissatisfaction plague our lives. Many people are always looking on the other side of the fence because the grass seems greener. We spend much of our time wishing things were different, overlooking all the blessings and opportunities afforded us.

Circumstances should not get us down. These outer wrappings of our inner lives are not nearly as important as our reaction to them. Paul urges us to “Rejoice in the Lord, always” (Philippians 4:11).

We should not confuse our needs with our desires. Jesus taught us to pray for our daily bread—keeping our desires in line with our needs. Paul exhorts us “having food and raiment, let us be therewith content” (1 Timothy 6:8). If Christ is the center of our endeavors and our all-sufficient Savior, like Paul, we will be contented Christians.

Prayer: Dear Lord, forgive us for fretting over earthly things. Help us cast our cares upon You, for You have promised to supply all our needs according to Your riches in glory. Amen

Anna Katherine and York Trivette

1992

*He is Risen Indeed*

Friday April 5, 2019

### ***I Know That My Redeemer Lives***

Read: Job 19: 23-29. Key Verse: Job 19:25 “ But as for me, I know that my redeemer lives, and He will stand upon the earth at last.”

Job faced every known crisis. He lost his wealth, family, friends and health. He cried out. He questioned, “why?” Yet, in the midst of all his suffering he said, “though He slay me, yet will I trust Him” (Job 13:15). The focus was not on the suffering or trials but on what he learned from it. He realized our God is sovereign over all creation! He is worthy to be praised and worshipped regardless of the circumstances. He did not know the future, but he witnessed when he proclaimed, “I know that my Redeemer lives” and that “I shall see Him”.

Most of us face nothing compared to Job. We need to learn, in whatever trials we have, that all of our questions and problems are answered perfectly in Jesus Christ. He alone identifies with our suffering. Christ is the believer’s Life, Redeemer, Mediator, and Advocate.

May we all learn from each experience and grow closer and more like Him. Let us shout to the world His coming as Job did: “I know that my Redeemer lives, and He will stand upon the earth at last.”

Prayer: Lord, we just praise You and thank You in all things. Thank You for knowing and understanding our weaknesses and failures. Forgive us our unbelief. Continue to hold us in Your hands and guide our every move. May we declare Thee to the world. In His precious name, Amen.

Joan Swingle

1988

*He is Risen*

Saturday April 6, 2019

***Seeing: The Resurrection***

Read John 20:1-8. Key Verse: John 20:8 “Finally, the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He (John) saw and believed.”

During this holy Easter season, many around the world, both in the church and without, will view the resurrection of our Lord Jesus in different ways. In our Scripture passage for today, John uses three different Greek verbs for *seeing* to indicate this spiritual truth. Notice carefully the *seeing* verbs in verses 5,6, and 8.

For some, the look at the resurrection will be just a casual glance as shown in verse 5. Yet others will pause and even take a second look as implied by the verb in verse 6. However, there will be those, like John of old, who will “see” this event from yet another level of spiritual perspective. This third level of seeing as indicated in verse 8, brings with it a true understanding of what is being seen. This type of perceiving or seeing, can only come from the risen Lord Jesus Himself. It is His gift of spiritual insight that enables one to see and believe.

At what level will you see the resurrection this Easter? Remember, believing is “seeing.”

Prayer: Dear God, thank You for giving, to all who would desire to “see” the resurrected Lord, that spiritual insight necessary to “see” and believe. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Gerald Malcolm

1990

*He is Risen Indeed*

Sunday April 7, 2019

***Faith in Action***

Read: Hebrews 11:23-29. Key Verse: Hebrews 11:23 “By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents”

A minister, preoccupied with writing his sermon, was unaware that a dam had burst and was flooding the valley. As water swirled into his church study, he fled to an upstairs window. Rising water forced him to the roof. Finally, he was driven to the top of the bell tower. With each change of location, a boat would pass by and its occupants would beg him to join them. Each time he responded with, “No, the Lord will save me.” Suddenly he was standing at the Pearly Gates. Saint Peter said, “Reverend Jones, what are you doing here?” The puzzled minister replied, “I trusted the Lord and thought He would save me from the flood.” Saint Peter, looking exasperated, said, “Well, we did send three boats!”

Sometimes trusting God calls for patient waiting. Other times faith is best exercised through planning and effort. Moses’ parents didn’t wait for a miracle that would keep their son from being killed. They hid him for three months then carefully planned for the day when they could no longer conceal him. And God honored faith in working clothes. Implicit faith was never meant to replace intelligent effort.

Prayer: Dear Lord, give me the courage of my convictions and the wisdom to discern whether those convictions require action or patience.

John Smalling

1992

*He is Risen*

Monday April 8, 2019

### ***Danger***

Read: 1 Corinthians 10:1-13. Key Verse: 1 Corinthians 10:12 "So be careful. If you are thinking, 'Oh, I would never behave like that ...'"

The verse above is continued in 1 Corinthians 10:12 to read "Let this be a warning to you. For you too may fall into sin". A potentially dangerous situation existed in the church at Corinth. Paul was warning that a Christian's faith prohibited any kind of relationship incompatible with his union with Christ. Paul warns the church to remember what happened to God's people years earlier in the wilderness. They were caught up in pagan revelry and sexual immorality and suffered the wrath of God.

Paul's warning is still true. We must not desire evil things as they did (Chapter 10, verse 6). These temptations are nothing new. Many others have faced the same problems. Later in this same chapter Paul gives us the hope and encouragement we need. We are told that no temptation will be so strong that we cannot stand up against it. How can we do this? By holding fast to God. Even when it seems impossible to hold on to God, He never finds it impossible to hold on to us. Because God knows our limits, we will not be tempted past the point of our being able to withstand. No temptation is irresistible with God keeping us strong. Is this an easy task? Never! What do we have as our promise? Forever!

Prayer: Lord, give us Your help to recognize and resist temptation in this life. Thank You for walking with us and helping us when we fall. Thank You for Your forgiveness. Amen

Betty and Ed DeVault

1995

*He is Risen Indeed*

Tuesday April 9, 2019

### ***Trial by Fire***

Read: 1 Peter 1:2-9, Job 23:10 & Daniel 3:14-30. Key Verse: 1 Peter 1:7 "These trials are only to test your faith,...as fire tests gold and purifies it and your faith is far more precious than gold."

The Lord provides each of us with joy, peace, and love. He also ensures trials to test our faith "as fire tests gold and purifies it." In our darkest moments God reminds us that He is the light that cannot be extinguished by the darkest of fears, loneliness, longing, or sin. The key verse reminds us that God does have us endure trials of fire in order to purify and strengthen our faith— an element "far more precious than gold".

Job said in his time of confusion and despair, "When He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold". In Daniel we see the power of faith when Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego refused to worship King Nebuchadnezzar's golden statue. The king had the three bound and thrown into a fiery furnace to die; but the Lord did not allow even a hair on their heads singed.

During Lent, try to think about how God maybe testing you to improve your faith. The Lord does give us what we need to quench the fires of life, though we may not understand at the time. While He molds us by those trials, He asks us to trust His protection and to be willing to grow in our faith in Him.

Prayer: Lord reveal to me the ways in which You and I can cope with the trials of life. Remind me that the flame can purify my faith and encourage my reliance upon You. Amen

Tish Oldham

1995

*He is Risen*

Wednesday April 10, 2019

### **Prayer**

Verse: James 4:2 “Ye have not, because ye ask not” and 1 Thessalonians 5:17 “Pray without ceasing”.

Pray without ceasing? How can I do that God? You know I have to clean and cook or go to school or work and a million other things. I can't do the things I need to do on my knees with my eyes closed. Of course, you can't, and God doesn't expect you to. We do need to set aside a time each day for quiet, concentrated prayer but as we go about our daily tasks, we can have a prayerful attitude. It will make us aware of needs around us and enable us to help where we can. It will make us sensitive to those we come in contact with who may need an encouraging word or just a listening ear.

We can send up “arrow prayers” anytime, any place, anywhere. They can be petitions, thank you, or I love you. Just as we love to hear from our children, our Heavenly Father loves to hear from us. And we know that He always hears and answers our prayers even though sometimes the answer is “no”, because He knows what will be good for us and what will be harmful. Has God ever said “no” to one of your prayers and you found out later that the consequences would not have been good if He had granted your request?

Prayer: Thank you God for loving us so much that You welcome our conversations with You and for loving us enough not to grant requests that would be harmful. We love you! Amen

Martha Gene Taylor

2019

*He is Risen Indeed*

Thursday April 11, 2019

### **On Christian Witness**

Read: Romans 5:2-5. Key Verse: Romans 5:2-4 “...and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.”

Have you ever been blessed by knowing a Christian who personified this scripture? I have followed some dear friends at our church through their trials. What powerful witnesses they have been! Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “Who you are speaks so loudly, I can't hear what you're saying.” The real test of a Christian's witness is facing some horrible circumstance, or catastrophe. How I have learned from the examples God has placed around me! I am so thankful for these friends and how God has used their lives.

Max Lucado in *He Still Moves Stones* has said, “Tragedy reveals a person's character.” Trials are character-building, and Christian character is a goal we should all strive for daily. Some good advice can be found in Charles Swindoll's “Attitude”: “I am convinced that life is 10 percent what happens to me and 90 percent how I react to it. And so it is with you. We are in charge of our attitudes.” Yes, we are in charge of our attitudes, our Christian attitudes...our Christian witness.

Prayer: Father, we acknowledge Your magnitude and power, and come to You with contrite hearts. Help us be worthy witnesses for You. When trials flood our lives, help us rise above them and realize the hope You have promised. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Jana Williams

1995

*He is Risen*

Friday April 12, 2019

### ***Sometimes We Forget to Give Thanks***

Read: Psalm 106. Key Verse: Psalm 106:13 “They soon forgot His works; they waited not for His counsel.”

We should always remember what God has done for us. We come to God in times of crisis, but when things are going smoothly, we sometimes forget.

In Psalm 106, God records these words about the Hebrews: “He saved them from the hand of the foe; from the hand of the enemy he redeemed them. They believed his promises and sang his praise. But they soon forgot what he had done.”

We feel protected and secure in all the bounty God has given us, but we sometimes become complacent and forget all that he has done for us. During a crisis, our thoughts and prayers are centered on the situation. We pray fervently with the hope that God will comfort us. When the situation becomes less critical, the need to pray seems less urgent.

When this happens, we should pray for forgiveness and ask God to give back the fervor of communion. We should never forget His great love and mercy, even when we least deserve it.

Prayer: Our Heavenly Father, help us to pray with thankful hearts for Your mercy in times of stress. We pray for forgiveness when we forget to give thanks for Your mighty works. May we be ever mindful of Your mercy and love. Amen

Martha Honaker

1992

*He is Risen Indeed*

Saturday April 13, 2019

### ***The Good Shepherd***

Read: 1 Peter 5:1-4. Key Verse: 1 Peter 5:2 “Tend that flock of God whose shepherds you are...”

In verse 1 of our scripture today, one would gather that the writer is exhorting his fellow leaders in the new church as to their responsibilities. To paraphrase it, “Lead as a good shepherd who tends his flock—not out of a sense of compulsion, but freely and lovingly; not for worldly gains, but for the crown of glory.”

The good shepherd is one who “cares” for his flock; not only “takes care of” but has love for the ones who are his responsibility. As in the parable of the Good Shepherd, he would leave the ninety-nine to search and find the lost one. This we know our Shepherd, Jesus Christ, will do.

To carry this further, each of us is, or should be, a shepherd as we go about our daily lives. As parents, teachers, church members, business or professional people, whatever our walk of life, the opportunity is there this day and every day to be a shepherd in His Kingdom. A kind word, a thoughtful gesture, turning the other cheek, going another mile, any of these could be the critical act which brings the lost sheep back to the fold.

Start this day in the spirit of the prayer of St. Francis: “Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace.” and He will.

Prayer: Dear Shepherd, May we keep our eyes on You through this day, sensitive to the needs of Your flock here at home and around Your world. Today may we reach out to that someone for the Kingdom as we follow Your direction through green pastures where the harvest is plentiful. In Your Name we pray, Amen.

Pat and Lewis Cosby

1986

*He is Risen*

Palm Sunday April 14, 2019

### ***A Christian Example***

Read: John 12:1-13. Key Verse: John 12:11 "Because by reason of him, many of the Jews went away, and believed in Jesus."

Many people have influenced me in my Christian growth. Many have encouraged me to have a closer walk with my Lord. Several of these may never know the impact they had on my life. Some of them never met me.

We may never know that someone became a believer because of us; that someone saw a glimpse of Christ in the way we live our lives. This thought should always be in our minds: that the way we conduct ourselves may cause others either to see Christ in our example, or to be turned away by it. What greater service can we do our Lord than trying to live a life that will lead others to our Lord Jesus Christ?

Prayer: Thank You, Lord, for Your great love and patience with us. Lord, please help us to seek a closer walk with Thee that we may be the light that shows someone else the way to believe in Jesus, Amen.

Dixie Grindstaff

1995

Monday April 15, 2019

### ***Is Your Dream BIG Enough ?***

Read: Exodus 4:8-10. Key Verse: Exodus 4:10 "But Moses pleaded with the Lord, 'O Lord, I'm not very good with words. I never have been, and I'm not now, even though You have spoken to me. I get tongue-tied, and my words get tangled'."

You are perfectly equipped for your personal mission. God has given you passion, skills, and talent, but at times you will feel totally unequipped. There will be moments or seasons when you will feel stretched; your mission will be "bigger than you."

When God told Moses that He was sending him to speak to Pharaoh to convince him to let the Israelites go, Moses felt incapable. As a result, God sent Aaron with Moses to speak for him. Even though Moses felt inadequate, it didn't stop God from using him for a mission. Moses needed God to show up because Moses' mission was "bigger than" he was.

When God wants to demonstrate His glory and make His name great, He isn't looking for the most capable person or the one who believes they are self-sufficient. He is looking for the person who is willing to use what He has placed in their hands to partner with Him to accomplish what seems impossible.

Tragically, most of us dream far too small. The only missions we have for God are the ones we can control and accomplish in our own strength with the resources we already possess. Dream big for God and remember this: What you can do in your own strength is only the beginning of how He can use you for His glory to change the lives of others. Can you imagine what He could do through you if you pursued what could only be accomplished with God as your partner?

If you don't have a mission to glorify God that is bigger than you, ask Him to give you one. Say,

Prayer: "Lord, how can I glorify You to fulfill Your purposes in the world? Use me for something bigger than me! God, stretch me! Give me Your big mission for my life so that I can reflect Your glory and complete Your purpose for my life." Amen

Bill Bridgforth, 2019

Tuesday April 16, 2019

### ***The Lord's Prayer***

Read: Matthew 6:9-13. Key Verse "...After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in Heaven...

Adrian Rogers in his book *When We Say Father*, speaks to each aspect of this most famous of prayers our Lord Jesus taught us. But first he emphasizes that when we pray, we should speak *with* God, not *to* God. It should be conversational, like we were sitting with God in our living room. God wants to know our hearts. He wants to know what is bothering us and what we wish from Him. Yes, of course, He already knows what we need, but having "conversation" with God changes *our* perspective about God. When we pray we *bond* with God. Rogers talks about the importance of prayer. He believes that the "Best" thing we can do is learn to pray.

He says prayer is our way to invite God into our lives. And we invite Him in as our "Heavenly Father". Earthly fathers provide guidance to their children, or so they should. God provides guidance to us as His children. And when we pray, we obtain this guidance. We also tell Him that we submit to His will on earth. ("...Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.") Now that can be very hard. Perhaps His will and our desires run contrary. What then? Back we go to "trusting" (see Proverbs 3:4-5). As hard as it may be, we must trust God to do what is best for us, whether we like it or not.

Forgiving our debtors is another important aspect of this prayer. (...forgive us our debts as we forgive...) If we go through the day (or life) holding grudges against our fellow man we limit what God can do with us. We must forgive and forget. According to Rogers we should forgive others the way God forgives us. That is freely, fully, finally and forcefully. The result: personal emancipation. "God's forgiveness takes care of your guilt; our forgiveness takes care of our bitterness."

Prayer: Our Father in Heaven, hear us as we invite You into our lives. Guide us as we attempt to live our lives in a manner pleasing to You. Strengthen us as we falter and lack trust. Enrich us as we drink in Your Glory and try and live for You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Mike McCalmont, 2019

*He is Risen Indeed*

Wednesday April 17, 2019

### ***Oneness with the Father***

Read: 1 Peter 2:21-25. Key Verse: 1 Peter 2:21 "For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in his steps."

In thinking of Jesus, we think of One Who was never overwhelmed by life's circumstances; One Who in very simple but direct ways took the steps He needed to take. Jesus knew the Father was with Him and demonstrated this in every area of His life.

When tasks or circumstances before us seem overwhelming, we should put this thought aside, keep our eyes upon our Father and affirm His presence with us. Then, we will follow Jesus in demonstrating our belief in our oneness with the Father in every area of our lives.

There is a way to handle every situation, and the Father within us will make the way known. We only need to wait upon Him, to take one step at a time and to know that every succeeding step will be revealed when it is needed.

We know how Christ suffered for us, how He died on the cross to save us from our sins. "He never sinned, never told a lie, never answered back when insulted; when He suffered He did not threaten to get even; He left His case in the hands of God."

He is our example. We must follow in His steps.

Prayer: Thank you, Father, for loving us so much that You sent Your only Son to suffer for us, to be our example. We pray that as we follow in His steps, knowing You are with us, that through You, we will be able to deal with life's circumstances as He did. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Hal and Mary Moss Littleford, 1986

*He is Risen*

Maundy Thursday, April 18, 2019

### ***The Last Earthly Supper***

Read: Luke: 22: 7-27. Key Verses: Luke 7:18, 27 “for I tell you that from now on I shall not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes...I am among you as one who serves”

We are so accustomed to calling the earlier events of the evening before Christ’s crucifixion the “last supper” that we may tend to overlook the fact that this was only his last meal with his followers “until the Kingdom of God comes.” Even though this last gathering of our Lord with His disciples is, in contemplation, a somber occasion, our hearts can leap up at the realization that this was not, for Christ’s followers, the “last supper”. We have His word that we too will sup with Him in another, triumphant time, when the dreaded curtain of death has been torn away and we experience the peace that surpasses all human understanding.

Christ, on the night in which He was betrayed, knowing all that lay ahead, must have had a heavy heart. Nevertheless, Jesus in that dark moment not only gave to His disciples a lasting memorial, but also gave them a lesson in humility which is the key to Christian living.

From the bread and the cup we are to remember Him always and to rededicate ourselves to Him and His teachings and from the washing of the disciples’ feet, we are to remember, to understand, that we are here to serve. We are to give ourselves in service and truly, we have no greater purpose on this earth.

Prayer: Our loving Heavenly Father, it is with a mixture of pain and joy that we approach the time of our Savior’s agony: pain for His suffering, joy for its meaning and purpose. Help us to rededicate ourselves daily to Thy service. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.

Bill Rickman

1986

*He is Risen Indeed*

Good Friday, April 19, 2019

### ***The Dark (?) Friday***

Read: John 19:17-30. Key Verse: John 19:30 “After Jesus had taken the vinegar He said, ‘it is accomplished,’ and bowing his head he gave up his spirit.”

Many events happened on that day before and after the crucifixion:

The night before Jesus had asked the Father to “remove this cup from me if it is possible”, but He prayed that the will of His Father be done. The cup did not pass and His earthly life was passed. The prophecies of Isaiah written many years ago had been fulfilled; the preachings, the teachings and healings completed. Jesus, however, died triumphantly. John provides us with the one word by which Jesus described that His goal was achieved, “accomplished”.

It was the time of Passover and ordinary people were probably gathered in their homes observing this day according to their ancient rituals.

Jesus had been led to Golgotha, scourged and nailed to the cross where for six hours He hung in agonizing pain. Pilate had tried to release Jesus, but his efforts are in vain.

Judas had hanged himself. The disciples were in hiding; only Peter’s presence was made at the cross, He had intended to be supportive, but in the end he denied that he had ever known Jesus.

The earth quaked and graves were opened. When the centurion heard His cry and saw how Jesus died, he exclaimed, “Surely this was the Son of God”. He really recognized the deity of Jesus.

This was a day that changed the history of the world. The man who would not save Himself saved us, and gave us joy and hope. Only God’s love can cause us to call this day “Good Friday”.

Prayer: Our Father, help us to see the real meaning of this day. Help us to live unselfishly for You and others today. Let us live that all will know that Your Son is our Lord and Savior, Amen.

Katherine Campbell, 1986

*He is Risen*

Saturday April 20, 2019

### ***Blessed Assurance***

Read: Philippians 1:20-25. Key Verse: Philippians 1:21 "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

To leave this world, we must all die. Certainly, there is a cloud of mystery and fear that overcomes us when we try to think of what that experience will be for us personally. As Paul said in Philippians, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain," As we approach Easter, we must apply this blessed assurance to our lives in order to give our best to further His kingdom here on this earth.

When we are very young, I think it is natural to pray to live to be older; when we are married, we pray for the life of our spouse; when we are parents, we pray not to outlive our children; when we are older, we pray for the health of our family and friends. As we age, we realize how fragile life really is. We love life, and the thoughts of it ending for any of our dear ones or ourselves is to experience a taste of forthcoming grief. As Dr. Shaw reminded us recently, "Time waits for no man."

Even Jesus on the cross, in His human state, briefly experienced fear and maybe anger. However, through His great sacrifice, we can rest assured, in a calm and peaceful way, that God will work out His plan in our lives and that there is nothing that can happen to us that is out of His wondrous control. We know that when a Christian dies, he has really just begun to live.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, let us give life the best that we can, and let us continue to give thanks knowing that we are secure in the knowledge that You are with us from our first breath to our last. Thank You for the blessed assurance that we can live life without fear, even of death. Amen

Ron and June Holland

1990

*He is Risen Indeed*

Easter Sunday April 21, 2019

### ***The Centerpiece of Christian Faith***

Read: Matthew 28:1-8 & 1 Corinthians 15:12- 20. Key Verse: Matthew 28:6 "He is not here: for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay."

At sunset on the day of Jesus' crucifixion, His small band of followers found themselves leaderless, deeply discouraged, and fearful; until they were suddenly revived and empowered by those few simple, mighty words spoken by the angel at the empty tomb: "He is not here. He is risen."

The Resurrection, the risen Christ, is the essential centerpiece of Christian faith. On that great fact God's entire plan of redemption is based. Paul says: "if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins."

The resurrection was God's vindication of His Son and set God's own seal on Jesus' claim to be the Messiah. Because Christ rose, we as His followers are given assurance of everlasting life: "Because I live, ye shall live also." (John 14:19)

"He is not here, He is risen." These words have sounded triumphantly down through the centuries. Christ's victory can be our victory also; because He rose, we can know that death is nothing more than a brief passage from darkness into the glorious light of eternal life.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank Thee for Thy saving grace and power as revealed in the glorious triumph of Christ's Resurrection. In His blessed name, Amen.

Lyman and Patty Fulton

1990

*He is Risen*

## Acknowledgements

To the writers of each of the devotionals, thank you. Reviewing the Lenten Devotional Books from the 1980's and 1990's was inspiring. There were many wonderful devotionals that were not able to be included because of space. Reviewing the 2019 devotionals was equally inspiring. First Presbyterian Church has a strong foundation of believers inspired by the Word of God as well as a current body of believers who continue to strengthen First Presbyterian Church in its mission to Glorify God, Grow in our knowledge of God, and Go in the Name of God to spread His word in our neighborhood, country, and the ends of the earth.

May the reading of the testimonies of your fellow-Christians be a blessing.