



Lenten Devotions
2020

TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH AND SCHOOL
40 West Nicholai Street
Hicksville, NY 11801

Provided by your Board of Christian Stewardship

Introduction

Lent is a time of repentance, a time to examine our lives and acknowledge the sins and sinful habits which plague us. It is a time to be humbled, as we admit our selfishness and renew our calling as servants of God. To me one of the greatest and most touching examples of the humility of Christ, an example He calls on us to follow, is recalled by the apostle John in this chapter of his Gospel:

“. . . having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. . . Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him. . .

When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, 'Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.'" (John 13:1b, 3-6, 12-16)

As you read these devotions, we pray that the Lord may impress on your heart the call we share: to humbly serve not just our brothers and sisters in the Lord, but the poor and downtrodden, the weak and helpless, the lost and the unlovely. For that is what Christ Jesus did for us.

Deacon Anthony Cavaliere,
on behalf of Trinity's Board of Stewardship

Ash Wednesday, February 26

by Deacon Anthony Cavaliere

“Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.” Matthew 6:6

Even though Jesus clearly says otherwise, many people, including large numbers of Christians act as if true spirituality and righteousness were a matter of outward appearance and the mindless repetition of prayers. Good deeds and outward piety may make people feel good about themselves, that they are not so bad after all, that they are actually good, maybe even very good. Their deeds may even earn them acclaim, fame, and awards. But unless the heart of that person doing those deeds is right with God, they are meaningless. Good deeds and prayer, according to Jesus, are to be done in secret, that is, without fanfare or drawing attention to the self. God will reward in secret.

Jesus wants us to be selflessly authentic: real, honest and humble. He wants us to follow His example of love, mercy and unselfish concern for the interests and spiritual well-being of others first. This is what He did by going to the cross to die for our sins.

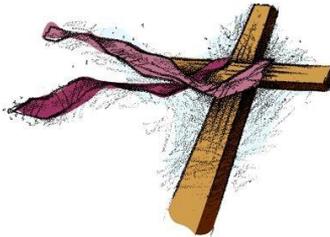
Thursday, February 27

by Jeanine Davis

“God has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men to see if there is anyone who understands, who seeks after God.

Every one of them has turned aside; together they have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.” Psalm 53:2-3

This Psalm, written by David, feels bleak. It’s titled “folly and wickedness of men.” He talks about the fool. But the positive is that God seeks us. Although I am a corrupt sinner, praise God that I have been made righteous through Christ, through no effort of my own, I am His child. He loves me always, even though I mess up regularly. I can trust in Him.



Friday, February 28

by Janice Gentles-Jones

For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. Galatians 5:13

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for the freedom you have given us through Jesus Christ. Because of it we do not need to submit to the yoke of slavery (Gal 5:1). Because of your freedom we are no longer under the law. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."(Gal 5:14)

With the freedom that you have given us help us to choose wisely in our interaction with others, whether believer or non-believer. When we argue or fight with each other, we foolishly become consumed by each other, instead of being consumed by love for each other, which you have graciously taught us.

Father, help us to not use our freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. (Gal 5:13) In that way, we'll walk with the Spirit and not inadvertently be led by our flesh, which you've told us conflict with each other.

Bring to our attention interactions that are not done in or with love and give us hearts that are filled with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control because against such things there is no law (Gal 5: 22-23).

In Jesus' name we humbly pray, Amen.

Saturday, February 29
by Deacon Betsy Lazarek

Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Galatians 5:24

Precious Savior, thank you for your sacrifice on the cross when you bore all my sins upon your shoulders, suffering such pain and anguish on my behalf! Because of this and my faith in you, I am dead to the old person of sin that I was and am raised up a new person. I admit that I still have many battles with temptations but I also have the power of your resurrection and the Holy Spirit at work within me.

Sweet Jesus, help me to keep the dead and cast-a-way sin of my past away from my heart and out of my life. And may my life always be a holy sacrifice that is pleasing to you. Amen.

Sunday, March 1

by Janice Gentles-Jones

Heavenly Father,

In this fallen world, You have graciously given us mercy, love and freedom of which we humbly thank You.

As we enter the season of Lent, fervently remind our heart of the ultimate sacrifice Jesus made because of His love for us. For as Scripture states, by this we know love, that He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. (1 John 3:16). Since we know love is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22), incline our hearts to freely give our love to each other as You have commanded when You said "Love you neighbor as yourself." (Mark 12: 30).

As we think about the freedom that You've given us through Your death, give us a heart that desires to share all good things with the one who teaches (Gal 6:6) so that You are not mocked. Your Word tells us that whatever one sows, that will he also reap. Therefore we ask that you create in us a pure heart that wants to sow to the Spirit so that we may reap eternal life (Gal 6:7).

*And finally, Father, help us to **"not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers."** Galatians 6:9-10*

In Jesus' name we humbly pray, Amen.

Monday, March 2

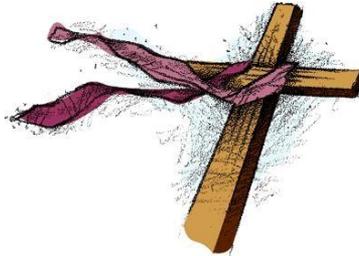
by Deacon Peggy Ruhs

“Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy!

I look to you for protection.” (NLT) Psalm 57:1

Psalm 57 was written by David when he was running, hiding, trying to escape King Saul who was determined to take his life. Imagine the stress David was under, trying to outsmart such a plan facing him. We have circumstances in our lives, not quite as drastic as that, but still very real. I can think of a couple in my life: when my son lost his arms or when my 3-year-old niece was lost at Jones Beach on a crowded Saturday afternoon. How do you handle the situation?

David did what the Lord wants us to do in these hair-raising situations. Call on Him. Trust in His love and ability to get us safely through the dark situation. Pray first. Listen. Then give thanks to the Lord for His faithfulness and love.



Monday, March 3

by Jeanine Davis

***“You have given a banner to those who fear You,
That it may be displayed because of the truth. Selah.
That Your beloved may be delivered,
Save with Your right hand, and answer us!”*** Psalm 60:4-5

David is lamenting over a battle and asking God to answer him. Ultimately, David puts his trust in God. Isn't that what we do? I know I complain to God, but sometimes I feel like He is not hearing me. I act like a toddler and demand an answer. But when I finally stop, sit still and lean into His presence, I find His mercy and guidance. The more I read His Word, the easier it is to trust His timing, not mine. Thank God for His abundant patience with me.

Wednesday, March 4

by Helen Peter

“I am the Lord’s servant,’ Mary answered. ‘May it be to me as you have said.’ Then the angel left her.” Luke 1:38

When the angel Gabriel first went to Mary he said “Greeting. You are highly favored! The Lord is with you.” She was troubled by his words. But the angel said to her “Do not be afraid Mary. You have found favor with God.” He told her she would have a son and to name Him Jesus. He would be the Son of the Most High.

At this point most teen-aged girls would have had many questions and probably would have told the angel that she had to think this over before giving an answer. After all, in those days for an unwed girl to be pregnant was a disaster. If the father of the child refused to marry her, she would probably remain unmarried for life. If her father rejected her she would most likely live a life of begging or prostitution in order to earn a living. There was a lot of risk.

No wonder Mary found favor in God’s eyes. She asked just one question: How could this be since she was a virgin? The angel answered “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.” “I am the Lord’s servant.” Mary answered. “May it be to me as you have said.” Mary knew God was asking her to serve Him, and she willingly obeyed.

Prayer:

Dear Lord, help us not to try to figure out what the bottom line is when you ask us to serve you. Like Mary, help us to completely trust and obey without question when you ask, and to say instead “Send me Lord!” Amen.

Thursday, March 5

by Deacon Doug Brosky

“He has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate. He has filled the hungry with good things and the rich he has sent away empty.” Luke 1:51-53

These words come from Mary’s song of praise (The Magnificat) after Elizabeth has affirmed Mary’s child as her Lord. Mary, when told by the angel Gabriel what had to be a crazy unbelievable story that she would conceive and bear the Son of God, did not doubt but trusted the word of the Lord. Who was she to receive such an honor? Mary did not live in a palace. She came from a backwater village with no claim to fame. Despite that, in these words Mary acknowledged that God chose her, and for that matter chose all of us not because we were special, but rather out of pure love and his promise going all the way back to the Garden of Eden that he would send a savior to destroy sin and reconcile us to God. This was not a gift to a select few but for all who come to Jesus. As Paul said in his letter to the Ephesians *“for by grace you have been saved through faith and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God”*.

Prayer:

Thank you, Lord, for the gift of your Son offered to all of us regardless of position or worth but rather by faith in your Son. Amen.

Friday, March 6

by Deacon Betsy Lazarek

"From the ends of the earth I call out to you, I call as my heart grows faint; lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe." Psalm 61:2-3

As believers in Jesus, we have the love, peace, and joy of Christ in our hearts and in our lives. However, in our lives we also have hardship, suffering, and struggle couched between all that wonderful love, joy, and peace.

In Psalm 61:2-3, David finds himself fainthearted and overwhelmed by isolation and trials. And like David, our journey through this life can overwhelm us at times too. Our journey can be likened to climbing up a mountain trail with a rocky and uncertain terrain. The journey is long, our footing unsure, and we become fatigued. We reach for one more rock above us, but our hands begin to slip and we realize that our strength is not enough to pull us up. We cry out, "Lord, help me!" as we extend our hand. And then it seems as if a hand from Heaven comes down and pulls us up to the cleft of the rock. And one more time we realize that when our strength has failed, God's grace has prevailed.

We breathe a sigh of relief and for a time bask in his presence, feeling joy and peace. About the time our wounds from the journey are healed and we feel pretty secure in our rocky refuge, we turn and look up the mountain and begin our ascent once more. We experience one insurmountable rock after another; never being able to scale any cliff in our own strength, but only with God's help.

As we go from one rocky crest to another, we discover that we get a clearer view of the glory of God. This motivates us onward. We still get weary from time to time and we ask the Lord, "How many rocks must I climb"? We answer our own question as we realize it will be as many as it takes to get to the top. And it will be at that mountaintop where we will fully experience the real Rock, the Lord Jesus, who is "higher than I".

Saturday, March 7

by Deacon Doug Brosky

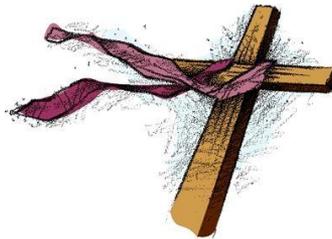
***“For God Alone O my sole, wait in silence
for my hope is from him. He only is my rock and
my salvation, my Fortress; I shall not be shaken.”*** Psalm 62:5-6

Patience. That has to be the most difficult attribute to exercise. When something is going wrong our first reaction is to jump in and make it right. I have to be in control. David in this Psalm is experiencing some difficulty, but instead of trying to take control and solve the problem himself he turns to God and places his trust in him alone, exercising patience “For God alone, O my soul waits in silence”. Easy to say but hard to do. We have all heard the advice let go and let God. Boy that is scary. Jump! Just trust me; I will catch you says the Lord.

David exhibits a faith we need to follow. May we also have the faith to set our priorities where the Lords calls us to place them. He is our rock and fortress. Our God like a solid rock and fortress does not change: He is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow.

Prayer:

Lord grant us a faith like David to let go and let you, in the sure knowledge that we are always in your loving arms. Amen.



Sunday, March 8

by Linda Hoerberlein

“Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands.”

Psalm 63:3-4

“I love you more than life itself.” How many parents have said that to their children? What does it mean to love someone more than life? King David wrote this psalm, recognizing his complete dependence on the Lord, saying that the love of the Lord is better than life. God is the perfect parent in that His love is perfect and sacrificial. He gives Himself to His children. He is the real life-giver.

So how do we respond to such love? We come to Him in awe of His great love and sacrifice in Jesus Christ our Lord. We praise and glorify Him with our lips. We worship Him by kneeling before Him in humility, by bowing before Him in reverence, and by lifting our hands in complete surrender as we trust in the One who loved us and gave His life for us. Lifting your hands in praise to God may be foreign to you, but consider this: Have you been to a concert or sports event where the fans are excited about their musical star or team? How do they respond? The hands go up, they clap and sing and shout, they dance and jump. All in praise of the star or the team. How much more praise and glory does the One who loves us so perfectly deserve from us? He certainly deserves our praise for the world to see.

Prayer:

Father, help me to love you more than life itself, that I may give you the praise you are so worthy of. Amen.

Monday, March 9

by John Mohlin

***“Then all mankind fears;
they tell what God has brought about
and ponder what he has done.***

***Let the righteous one rejoice in the Lord
and take refuge in him!***

Let all the upright in heart exult!” Psalm 64:9-10

I went for a bike ride in the preserve nearby, trying to clear my head of all the worries and distractions. I realized that all too often I take for granted God and His awesome creation. The sun is rising over the trees just as we expect it to do every morning, and gives us light for a new day. Signs of spring returning are already around us if we look. A baby in a stroller is soaking up all of her new world. I forget how God manages all these things for our good. How awesome and mighty is He who is in charge.

And how much more awesome is it that God gave us a Savior to take our place and pay the price for the sins that we have committed. Thank goodness that God is in control.

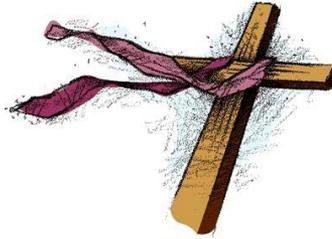
Prayer:

Heavenly Father, please forgive me when I do not see the wonder of Your creation. Help me see Your presence in the big, and the little things in my life. May my life reflect the love that You first showed us. And send Your Holy Spirit to help me keep the faith regardless of my circumstances. Amen.

Tuesday, March 10
by Cristina Castrillon

***“Blessed is the one you choose and bring near,
to dwell in your courts!
We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house,
the holiness of your temple!”*** Psalm 65:4

Lent is a time to have patience. We should keep patience in our heads and in our hearts when thinking about loved ones and especially with people we don't always get along with. It is better to be kind than to hold hate or anger in your heart.



Wednesday, March 11

by Deacon Lynn Waldeck

John answered them all, saying, “I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.” Luke 3:16-17

John was a powerful preacher whose ministry was baptism in water, hence the name John the Baptist. He preached a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. His baptisms showed others that the one being baptized had repented of their sins and had been forgiven. John was the forerunner of Jesus and some thought he was the Christ. John minimized his self and always shifted the attention to Jesus. He said ***“But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.”***

Water is a symbol of cleansing and John made sure that those being baptized had truly repented, that they changed their actions and not just feel that they had. John preached repentance and forgiveness but knew that salvation and judgment would come through Jesus. I wonder if we could be like John if we were as powerful and highly regarded as he was? Would we be humble and remember to give the glory to Jesus and not bask in it ourselves?

Pray that we always stay humble and thank God everyday for all that we have in our lives.



Thursday, March 12

by Kim Merz

And Jesus answered him, “It is written,

**“You shall worship the Lord your God,
and him only shall you serve.”** Luke 4:8

It you remember the context from which this verse is taken (Luke 4:1-13), Jesus is being tempted by the devil after forty days of fasting in the wilderness. He is offered all the kingdoms of the world if He will only bow down to worship Satan. Can you imagine? And yet, Jesus stays strong, reminding Satan that only God Himself is to be worshiped.

How strong are you? How well do you hold up under temptation? I for one, am weak. Because of our sinful ways, because we are weak, it is important to know that if we call out for help when we are tempted, the Holy Spirit will give us the strength we need to resist that power of temptation. It's not about that piece of chocolate cake you really should pass up or walking away from an expensive pair of shoes you'd really like to have. It's about spending time in God's presence, becoming strong in His Word, which equips us to face the challenges of temptation in our everyday lives, the temptations of sin, which everyone is subjected to. Jesus quoted God's Word to defy the devil's offer. It would serve us well to be able to do the same.

Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father, I am weak. Time after time I fail to follow Your direction and keep Your commandments. For this, I am sorry. Thank you Jesus for Your death on Calvary, for carrying my sin and weakness to the cross so that I will one day be with You in paradise. And thank you Holy Spirit for hearing my cry, for helping me in times of trouble. Amen.

Friday, March 13

by Deacon Doug Brosky

“Who is God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain his anger forever because he delights in steadfast love.” Micah 7:8

Now admit it, how many of us could find Micah without first looking at the contents page of our Bible. We perhaps could say I knew he was a prophet but that is as far as most of us could go. Micah was sent by God to Jerusalem to call the people to turn back to God. His efforts seemed futile and the people turned from God with the result that Babylon completely destroyed Jerusalem including the temple and exiled all but the poorest. Micah was left with a destroyed city and pitiful remnant of the people.

How would you have reacted? Well his initial response in 7:1 was “woe is me.” However, Micah did not wallow in his self-pity but turn to the God he knew and trusted, a God who would forgive our sins when we truly repent and restore us to Him in His “steadfast love”.

Prayer:

Lord may we all have the faith of Micah that, no matter how hopeless a situation may appear, we have the assurance as Jesus told his disciples “behold I am with you always to the end of the age”.

Saturday, March 14

by John Doughty

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

On the Sabbath at the start of His public ministry Jesus went to the synagogue and read these words from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah, 61: 1-2 “The Year of the LORD’S Favor:”

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn.

In a just a few words, Jesus announces with the strength of the Holy Spirit his special public ministry, planned from birth as sent by God the Father to save all sinners who believe in Him. Jesus is beginning his very long road to the cross, over a period much more than Lent’s forty days to fulfill God’s promise of grace, love and forgiveness while preaching, teaching, healing and performing miracles.

Lent, for us all is a much shorter journey. An important time to reflect on our lives as Christian believers, including how we frequently fall short of God’s expectations; as sinners. We should examine our sinful lives, ask for forgiveness and prepare for the solemn Holy Week events in which Jesus fulfills His mission on earth by suffering, dying on the cross for all our sins and conquering death so that we might live forever in His comforting waiting arms in Heaven.

Let us too proclaim “The Year of the LORD’S Favor” and by the grace of His continuing love and mercy know we are forgiven and saved. Thanks be to God!

Sunday, March 15

by Elaine Koop

"Let God be exalted!" Psalm 70:4

Who would disagree with that?!

In part, the definition of the word "exalt" is: "to glorify or elevate something, to rejoice; to hold or raise someone up to a high position or status."

We surely have good reason to rejoice! We sinners have the undeserved gift of salvation to all who believe in Jesus. Eternal life!!

The Bible tells us that the cherubim and seraphim continually praise God saying, "Holy! Holy! Holy!" Do we?

We live in a busy world of many distractions. Are we able to stay focused for even one hour a week while in church and give God the glory He continually deserves from us?

Giving God glory and exalting Him doesn't just mean singing loudly to praise Him (although, Mr. DeVries would certainly encourage you to do so!) but it comes in all forms . . . greeting each other with the love of Jesus in your heart and a smile, attending Bible study, ushering, altar guild, Sunday school, outreach, choir, church council, acolytes, readers, youth group, altar servers and on and on.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, forgive us for all of the times we become distracted and don't give You all of the glory! Please give us hearts that exalt You always! Amen.

Exalt His Holy Name!

Monday, March 16

by Patricia Griffith

Since me youth, God, you have taught me, and to this day I declare your marvelous deeds.

Even when I am old and very, do not forsake me, my God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your mighty acts to all who are to come. Psalm 71:17-18

Every day we experience the wonders of God in our daily life. We revel in the birth of a new baby. We exclaim over the beauty of the first snowfall. We acknowledge His Divine Plan in the Spring when the earth bursts forth in flowery brilliance. Each day brings a new example of how indebted we are to our Glorious Maker. And He continues to teach us and show Himself in every situation we find ourselves in.

All these things impress on us how small we are in the scheme of things. As we mature, we truly realize it is God who makes all things possible. We are nothing without Him. We bow down to His Holy Name in humble and redeeming grace.

Prayer:

Dear Lord, please, in your ultimate wisdom, give me the words and the actions to impress on others how much we need you. Allow me to set an example for the young, so they might also know you as the Magnificent Lord and giver of life that you are. And let them see and believe that through the sacrifice of your Son, Jesus Christ, we will share in your eternal Heavenly Kingdom. Let all bow down before you as the humble servants that we are. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Tuesday, March 17

by Erika Skoch

***Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel,
who alone does wondrous things.
Blessed be his glorious name forever;
may the whole earth be filled with his glory!
Amen and Amen!*** Psalm 72:18-19

During the season of Lent we reflect upon the sacrifice Christ made for the sake of our sins and the hope of eternal life in heaven. However, this Psalm reminds us of the wonderful creation that He has given us to use and care for until we meet Him face to face. If we look around at the wonder of nature- the roaring seas, the gentle wind, the colorful plants, the beautiful animals- we see God at work, and we see that His creation truly declares His glory. We see the miracle of His creation when new life begins to grow again after natural disasters. There are many in this world who do not yet realize the glory of God, so we need to pray that we may never grow weary of declaring the glory of God's name. Today, let us not only thank and praise God for the willing sacrifice of His Son, but also for providing a beautiful earth for His children.

Prayer:

Dear Father in Heaven, Thank you for the blessing of Your glorious creation. Thank you for sending Your Son to die for our sins. You alone are worthy of our praise. Please forgive us for the times we have not given you glory, and help us to never tire of sharing Your Word. Blessed be Your name forever! Amen.

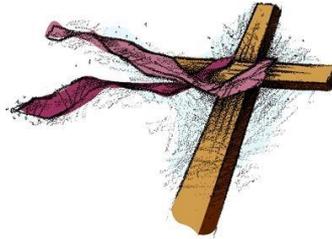
Wednesday, March 18

by Deacon Doug Brosky

“Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.”

Luke 5:31-32

These words are spoken by Jesus after the Pharisees complained to him about his associating with sinners, and, even worse, tax collectors. Aren't we at times like the Pharisees? Perhaps we may not say it out loud, but we think it. I am better than them, thank God I am not like those other guys, those sinners. However, we are like those people for as Paul reminds us “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Thank God that He sent His Son, the Great Physician, that each and every one of us needs to cure us of the disease that only He can cure.



Thursday, March 19

by Linda Hoeberlein

“Have regard for your covenant, because haunts of violence fill the dark places of the land. Do not let the oppressed retreat in disgrace; may the poor and needy praise your name.” Psalm 74:20-21

Jesus said, “If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you.” It helps to remember Jesus’ words, especially when we see the chaos in the world around us. Righteous living has become unpopular. Though it may seem that darkness, violence, and hatred prevail in our land, God is in ultimate control. His grace is greater than all the evil in the world.

We wonder why God would allow hatred, violence and suffering in the world. It’s when we are lonely and afraid, that we must trust that God is with us. Apart from Jesus, our lives are empty. He is the One who gives us meaning and purpose and true fulfillment. Sometimes we focus more on what we don’t have, rather than on what we have been given. We forget that God is good and merciful and that He works good out of every situation for those who love Him. God’s new covenant enables us to have a personal relationship with Him through Jesus’ bloodshed at Calvary. He holds each one of us in the palm of His hand. He provides for our needs and warms us with His love. We praise Him for His love and faithfulness and for what we have been given through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Prayer:

Father, help me to remember the grace of my Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for my sake He became poor, so that through His poverty I have become rich. Amen.

Friday, March 20

by Dolores Entenmann

“O Lord, God of Israel, there is no God like you, in heaven or on earth, keeping covenant and showing steadfast love to your servants who walk before you with all their heart,” 2 Chronicles 6:14

Solomon’s prayer at the dedication of the temple that he built for the Lord’s resting place, was for temporal mercies and spiritual blessings. God was well pleased with the temple and by filling it with a cloud, signified His acceptance of it just as the tabernacle was in the days of Moses.

Solomon humbled himself before God and kneeling with outstretched arms toward heaven before his people and for all to see, prayed, thanking God for His steadfast love for those who were faithful and steadfast in their love for Him as well.

Prayer:

May our hearts become Emmanuel’s (God with us) resting place; and by our faith may Christ dwell there. May God sanctify our hearts as His temples and fill them with His everlasting steadfast love. Amen.

Saturday, March 21

by Kathleen Porzio

‘But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.’ Luke 6:35-36

Sometimes I forget, as many Christians do, that God loves everyone and that His son, Jesus Christ, died and rose again for all our sins, not just the righteous. We, as Christians, are called to be kind to each person, not just the ones who are good to us. In fact, we have to share what we can with others, not just the people who show us generosity. Many times, we expect something in return, after giving someone something or helping that person in some way. We often complain when that individual does not return the favor or does not appreciate our aid. We must forgive others as God forgives us. Furthermore, we should remember that the best reward is God’s gift to us, especially the gift of Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection. What does He expect in return? He desires only our faith and to share His love with others.

Prayer:

Dear Lord, help your children remember what Your Son gave to all people. Help us realize we are all brothers and sisters in Christ and not expect anything in return when we share what we have from You except to be a part of Your glorious kingdom. Aid us in sharing our possessions, time, and talents, according to Your will, no matter if our recipients appreciate our kind gestures or not. Help us remember that Your love not only includes devout Christians but extends to everyone around the globe, righteous or not. Amen.

Sunday, March 22

by Terri A. Cavaliere

“ . . .give and it shall be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put in your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.” Luke 6:38

Taken out of context, it appears that Jesus is referring only to giving temporal goods. But taken together with verse 37, one gets a broader view of the principle of sowing and reaping. Jesus begins with these words: “Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not and you will not be condemned; forgive and you will be forgiven.” No matter what we give, forgiveness, judgment, money, etc., we will receive proportionately with what we give. If mercy, we get mercy, if we are critical, we can expect to be criticized in return; if donating money, God always gives it back to us. Martin Luther told his wife that the way to be sure we have something is to give away what you possess. This is the irony of giving: We must give if we desire to have.

The words “pressed... shaken... running over... put in your lap” had meaning to those who lived with Jesus. They represented market traditions of the times to ensure a good deal when selling grain. A generous portion of grain could be dispensed into a cloak. Jesus was emphasizing the lesson that you get when you give.

Prayer:

Lord, thank you for your lessons and your blessings. You ask so little of us, yet You teach us to be generous to others. Remind us daily that we receive in proportion to what we give. Amen.

Monday, March 23
by Dolores Entenmann

“When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”

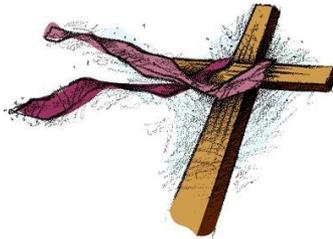
2 Chronicles 7:13-14

In these tumultuous times of fires, riots, threats of war, our God says to us - His people, to humbly call upon him and pray and to stop our wicked ways so that He will forgive us and heal us and our land.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, we are sinners. We ask you to forgive us our sin, and lead us not into further temptation of sin so that you can hear from your heavenly throne that we are repentant.

But unlike Solomon, there is no acceptable sacrifice that we can make and so we are forever thankful to you, Father, for sending us the precious gift of Your Son, who is the embodiment of Your will; and who by His stripes we are healed, by His piercings our sins are forgiven and by His death we can look forward to eternal life. We pray this in the name of Jesus who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.



Tuesday, March 24

by Denise Fields

“And he answered them, “Go and tell John what you have seen and heard; the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them.” Luke 7:22

In Luke 7, John the Baptist’s disciples are confronted with something indefinite. Doubts have arisen as to whether or not Jesus is the Messiah. So John sends his disciples to Jesus with a pointed question: “Are You the one who is to come, or shall we look for another”? Whether these doubts concerning Jesus’ identity originated in the minds of His disciples or in the mind of John himself we are not told, but this much is definite: some are unsure as to whether or not Jesus is the Christ.

Jesus quotes Isaiah 35: 5-6 and 61:1, both messianic prophecies, staking a definite claim to His status. “I am the Messiah!” Jesus says. When Christ returns, “The Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces” (Isaiah 25:8). This is definitely our Lord’s promise.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, prepare us to receive Your very body and blood by forgiving us our sins and let us then rejoice that in You the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Good News preached to them; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit one God now and forever. Amen.

Wednesday, March 25

by Deacon Doug Brosky

***“Do not remember against us our former iniquities;
Let your compassion come speedily to meet us, for
We are brought very low. Help us. O God of our salvation,
For the glory of your name; deliver us, and atone for our sins,
For your name sake.”*** Psalm 79:8-9

These words are a cry for help. The Psalm most likely was composed after the destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon and the exile of most of Israel into that foreign and distant land. All seems lost. Imagine suddenly that your church, home and entire town is destroyed and you are taken in chains to a foreign country. How would you feel? Israel had turned its back to God and was facing the consequences. They deserved what they were experiencing.

Hope however, was not lost. The psalmist turns to God asking forgiveness, not because they deserve forgiveness but because he recognized that they had a God of mercy and cries out for mercy. Did you notice the words *“deliver us and atone for our sins?”* The psalmist is asking God to make it right, to forgive their sins and restore them to a right relationship with Him.

In this Lenten season may we never forget God sent His Son to pay the price we could not pay and in faith, as the psalmist says, *“deliver us and atone for our sins.”* Thanks be to God who will forgive our iniquities through faith in Christ Jesus.

Thursday, March 26

by Denise Fields

***“But let your hand be on the man of your right hand,
The son of man whom you have made strong for yourself!
Then we shall not turn back from you;
Give us life, and we will call upon your name!
Restore us, O Lord God of hosts!
Let your face shine, that we may be saved!”*** Psalm 80:17-19

This Psalm speaks about the King of Israel from David’s line, pointing toward the coming of the Messiah, Jesus who is the true son of man who sits at the right hand of God.

The psalmist recognizes that God’s acts of salvation in the past speak assurances for His salvation in the future. Israel repeatedly turned away from the Lord, thus incurring His judgment as a call to repentance. In what ways have we suffered as a result of our turning away? God’s pattern of salvation through history provides reliable assurances that God has saved us before; He shall yet save again!

Prayer:

Dear Lord, during this Lenten season, please bring to our minds our sins of commission and omission against Your Holiness. As You have delivered Your people of old, so also deliver us for the sake of Your Son, Jesus, Amen.

Friday, March 27

by Deacon Doug Brosky

“No one after lighting a lamp covers it with a jar or puts it under a bed, but puts it on a stand, so those who enter may see the light. For nothing is hidden that will not be seen nor is anything secret that will not come to light.” Luke 8:16-17

The Gospels use the word light in many contexts. John, in his Gospel's opening verses, speaking of Jesus, says “In him was life and the life was the light of men”. Later Jesus himself says “I am the light of the world” (8:12). In this passage Jesus is not talking about mere illumination, but rather the very Word of God. When we hear God's Word, we have a couple of choices. We can ignore it. We can reject it, or we can accept it. The Children's song “This Little Gospel Light of Mine” chooses the last option saying “let it shine, let it shine”.

Jesus is telling us in these verses that we cannot simply put his message under a jar or bed and convince ourselves “there is nothing to see here”. We are called to pay serious attention to God's word. There are consequences. Jesus' words in Revelation are telling: “because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold I will spit you out of my mouth” (Rev. 3:16).

Prayer:

Lord may we always accept Your word with joy and be prepared to share that hope and joy with all who we come in contact. Amen.

Saturday, March 28

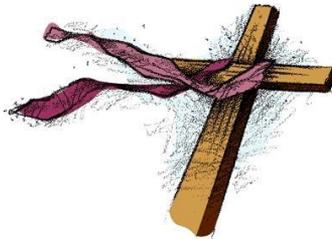
by Dawn Porzio

"How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked?" Give justice to the weak and the fatherless, maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy, deliver them from the hand of the wicked." Psalm 82:2-4

In this world, there are people who will be nasty and act in a harsh, rash way to those who are downtrodden. We, as God's children, are called to give support to the weak and powerless, not to belittle those who are hurt and alone. God loves all His people, so we must shine our light on our fellow human beings.

As sinners, we act wickedly and disobey God's rules. Judging others is a sin, which is a part of us all, yet God forgives us when we repent. We make mistakes but that does not define our relationship with God.

We are all missionaries for our Heavenly Father. We all have the ability to read His "love letter," to us, the Bible, and to teach others. This is how we shall rescue the ones who are in need of God's love.



Sunday, March 29

by Deacon Doug Brosky

‘For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.’ Psalm 84:10

How often do we see people totally focused in this life on securing a more powerful position, having the biggest house, a more impressive car, in general, focusing on self and how self-important they feel based on their perceived status. Such an attitude pleases Satan, but flies in the face of God’s command. *“Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”* God knows we need food and shelter. Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount tells us *“your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you.”* (Matthew 6:32-33). The psalmist here gets their priority right.

Prayer:

Lord, may we store up treasures, not here on earth where they can fall apart or be stolen, but as You have told us “lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven... for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Matthew 6:20-21

Monday, March 30

by Rita Liba

“And when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling, and falling down before him declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed. And he said to her, ‘daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace.’” Luke 8:47-48

I love this story. It's about a woman who did not think she was worthy of healing because she was poor, but Jesus saw it differently. He knew her faith was rich, and because of her faith, He healed her. It doesn't matter what our status is, all we need is it to have God in our life and we have everything.

Prayer:

Dear Jesus, we, like the woman who felt unworthy, don't feel we are entitled to your healing; but we know in your infinite mercy, that your love for us will get strengthen us through all our pains and sorrows. We ask you dear Jesus, to heal us like you did the woman who believed in you, as we are believers too. In your holy name we pray, Amen.

Tuesday, March 31

by Deacon Anthony Cavaliere

“You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.” John 13:13-16

I have always considered this to be one of the most emotionally moving scenes in the Scriptures. Here Jesus demonstrated to His disciples and us the fullest extent of His humility and love. He, though God Almighty, became a common servant to perform the lowly and humiliating task of washing the dirty feet of His loved ones. In this act Jesus symbolized His entire human life and ministry as well as what would happen a few hours later on the cross. Jesus would clean the filth of sin from His disciples, from us, by suffering the most degrading and humiliating death possible: crucifixion.

During we lent we should remember that Jesus desires that we imitate Him as servants and pour out our love in the service of others who do not deserve our help, both fellow Christians and unsaved alike. Christians are to be known by their love and humble service. There are no ministries or tasks unworthy of our talents, stature, educational background, financial class, or gender. There are no individuals or groups of people that are beneath our dignity to help and love. As we look to the cross, let us pray for the humility and compassion of Jesus so that we may serve those who are unlovable and undeserving just as He did for us.



Wednesday, April 1

by Rita Liba

“Incline your ear, and answer me, for I am poor and needy.

Preserve my life, for I am godly, save your servant, who trusts in you - you are my God.” Psalm 86:1-2

We are weak, poor, needy, and certainly not worthy, but we do have steadfast love for our God. We are servants to share God’s love with all. In this passage, we are asking God to save us from wickedness, as we put all our trust in him.

Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for Your undying love for us, who are truly not worthy, but have put our trust in You. Guide us to be better servants in our walk with You. Amen.

Thursday, April 2

by Deacon Lynn Waldeck

“And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.” Luke 9:23-24

“Take up your cross and follow Me,” plain and simple means being willing to die in order to follow Jesus.

The cross in Jesus’ time meant one thing and that was death. People had to carry their own cross to the place where they would die by being crucified, a death that was more painful than we could ever imagine. When people say they have a cross to bear as a burden in their lives, that is not what Jesus meant when he said ***“Take up your cross and follow Me.”*** Because Jesus died on the cross for us, the cross now is a symbol of love and forgiveness.

It is easier to follow Jesus when our lives are going well. It is harder when times are tough and those times will come. Here in the United States we are free to follow Jesus, but in parts of the world people are not. Would you be willing to lose family, friends or your job? How about losing your life? It doesn’t mean those things will ever happen to any of us but would you be willing to lose any of these to follow Jesus.

During this time Jesus was getting his disciples ready for death. Some thought the kingdom was coming soon not the death of their own plans and dreams along with Jesus. Jesus’ life began in a humble stable, he owned nothing, served God willingly and gave up control. Can we do that? Living not for ourselves but for others is not easy. It is something we get to try each and every day...with the help of Jesus.

Friday, April 3

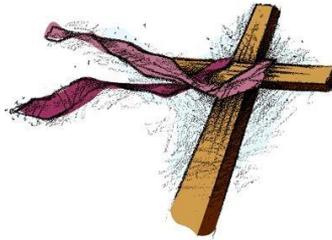
by Deacon Peggy Ruhs

“Whoever receives this child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. For he who is least among you all is the one who is great.” Luke 9:48

We all like to be recognized. The disciples were just ordinary men, handpicked for a very special livelihood. Special! They certainly would be important in God’s Kingdom. Priests, pastors, bishops, deacons, faithful worshippers and the like. Special! So the disciples discussed among themselves and decided to ask Jesus as to who was the most special.

Jesus, however, was well known to answer inquiries with illustrations. His disciples received an important message when He held up a child, the example of humility and faith.

During this Lenten season, let us all follow the wisdom of Jesus and ask Him for child-like faith and trust.



Saturday, April 4

by Linda Hoeberlein

“The heavens praise your wonders, Lord, your faithfulness too, in the assembly of the holy ones. For who in the skies above can compare with the Lord? Who is like the Lord among the heavenly beings? 7 In the council of the holy ones God is greatly feared; he is more awesome than all who surround him.” Psalm 89:5-7

God is awesome, isn't He? Creation tells of the wonders of a mighty God who spoke it all into existence. Romans 1 says that creation itself displays God's invisible qualities – His eternal power and divine nature. And by looking at what He has made, we have no excuse but to know that God exists. Those who say there is no God fail to see the divine order of His creation.

We look up and see the beautiful blue sky and the white clouds and the sun which gives us light by day. At night we see the moon and the stars shining. We look up and remember that Jesus died and rose again and ascended to Heaven and there He sits at the Right Hand of the Father. We think of those who have left this life to go and be with Jesus. One day, we who trust in Him will have a great reunion in the presence of Jesus Christ our Lord.

There is a song that Trinity's NDW Band sings. The last verse reminds me of the great crowd of worshipers in Heaven. "I long to be where the praise is never ending, yearn to dwell where the glory never fades, where countless worshipers will share one song, and cries of 'Worthy' will honor the Lamb." No one deserves praise like Jesus does. He has died for our sins and risen from the dead and has given us the hope of everlasting life. No one in the skies above or on the earth below can compare with Him. He is awesome, isn't He?

Sunday, April 5

by Rosemary and Ted Perfetti

It is written in Luke 9:51, ***“And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem.”*** In other versions, it is said, "As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem." Other terms used are: DETERMINED, INTENSLY, HE PROCEEDED WITH A FIXED PURPOSE, WITH A CLEAR KNOWLEDGE OF WHAT AWAITS HIM.

In Isaiah 50:7, it was prophesied, "I have set my face like a flint." To accomplish the purpose of the unlimited divine love our God has for us, our 100% God, 100% human, knew what he had to endure. Of course, not to the degree our Lord did, but we have known the feelings of despair and suffering to some extent. When we must face life-changing challenges, and we know there's obstacles and setbacks in our way, we set our face and meet these challenges head-on. Like Christ, we have faith in our heavenly Father to be with us and help us to "set our face" to go forward to conquer our fears and accept the challenge.

He was God from eternity, can He now turn this back on God? Can God the Son ever turn his back on God the Father? Step by step, event by event, being full of love for us and obedient to His Father, he continued with his long, torturous journey to the cross, knowing the outcome, a devastating trip that will take Him to the depths of hell, all for the love He has for us and to pay for our sins.

After all that He has done for us, how can we now forsake Jesus? How can we now not follow Him? Can we now not love Him or not love one another? Is your face set towards Jesus and the sacrifice that He has made for us?

Monday, April 6

by Lauren Straub

In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, “I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes; yea, Father, for such was thy gracious will. All things have been delivered to me by my Father; and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.” Luke 10:21-22

Jesus, now grown and on his mission to reveal the word of God, has chosen a group to spread that word further. Those chosen bring back the results of their work and Jesus “rejoices” through the Holy Spirit thanking his Father for the results of this work. Father, Son and Holy Spirit are spoken of separately yet together in this passage. Jesus declaring that all he says and knows is from God his Father.

It is significant that Jesus declares that God is his father to his followers. This aspect of Jesus’ identity and relationship to God the father had not been clearly defined. What also strikes me is that Jesus knows where his path is leading yet he is rejoicing in the face of it. Rejoicing. Knowing the cross lies ahead. Enlarging his father’s kingdom takes precedence even over his own life.

How do we, who sin and break God’s commandments, like those before us, bring such rejoicing to our God? Was the knowledge that God’s kingdom on earth was growing enough to bring on rejoicing? How incredibly fortunate are we to have such a God whose selflessness gives us eternal life!

Prayer:

Dear Lord, I thank You daily for the sacrifice of Your Son for me. It is impossible for me to understand the depth of Your love, yet I continue to try to understand it. Today, I will again attempt to live up to Your hope for me. Thank You for Your forgiveness when I fail. I rejoice in You. Amen.

Tuesday, April 7

by Rosemary and Ted Perfetti

Jesus states in John's gospel (14:6): ***"I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father, except through me."***

As sinners, we are doubtful that this verse can possibly pertain to us. But we are also told that our sins have been "paid for" with Christ's death on the cross. It is difficult for us to feel worthy of this love, but it is unconditional. John 3:17-18 ***"For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him; He that believeth in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son."***

As followers of Jesus, we believe these words and accept as true what God has done. Our sins have been erased; the debt has been paid. We shall be saved because the Father loves us and gave his Son to perish for our sins. This is the basis of our faith and we must firmly stand on His promise. ***"No one can come the Father, except through me."*** There is no other way, there is no other road. Again, He states, ***"I AM the way, the truth and the life."***

Though difficult at times, our faith should be unwavering; we should be adamant in our beliefs and always remember what our Father has done for us. Spread the message all we can, whenever we can and wherever we can; let us not be complacent. For how can others believe if no one spreads the Gospel? There is ONE mediator between God and man, and that is the Lord himself. We need constant prayer and meditation to help ourselves, family, friends, and strangers to bear witness and to help acquaint others with the Lord and His sacrifices for our sins. As we embark on the Lenten season and its renewal, re-live His passion; anticipate His glorious and victorious resurrection over death and sin, keep the message that the Gospel proclaims, ***"No one can come to the Father except through me"*** in your hearts and minds.

Wednesday, April 8

by John Doughty

And he said to them, "When you pray, say:

Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation."

These words spoken by Jesus, "The Lord's Prayer" were introduced in Luke 11:1 *"Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples."*

It's certainly a very important prayer, taught to many of us as young children, recited in virtually every worship service we attend and other times, along with our Statement of Faith within the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds. Herein, Jesus teaches His disciples to pray; He encourages us to actively pray often; seeking forgiveness for our many sins, forgiving others and resisting the many temptations we face in our day to day lives.

As older children and young adults in confirmation we studied Luther's Catechism. I revisited his teachings on the words above and share them with you here:

The Fifth Petition

And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

What does this mean? We pray in this petition that our Father in heaven would not look at our sins, or deny our prayer because of them. We are neither worthy of the things for which we pray, nor have we deserved them, but we ask that He would give them all to us by grace, for we daily sin much and surely deserve nothing but punishment. So we too will sincerely forgive and gladly do good to those who sin against us.

The Sixth Petition

And lead us not into temptation.

What does this mean? God tempts no one. We pray in this petition that God would guard and keep us so that the devil, the world, and our sinful nature may not deceive us or mislead us into false belief, despair, and other great shame and vice. Although we are attacked by these things, we pray that we may finally overcome them and win the victory.

The 'Victory' indeed, albeit undeserved is ensured by Jesus' pain, suffering & death on the cross. During this Lent I encourage us all to pray often preparing our hearts while reflecting on our weaknesses & frequent sins,

asking for forgiveness and forgiving others that have wronged us. Jesus Loves us All and will Rise Again. Amen.

Maundy Thursday, April 9

by Deacon Lynn Waldeck

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

Matthew 26:26-28

Here it is Maundy Thursday, the day we celebrate the first Lord’s Supper. But it also the night that we remember it was Jesus’ last night before His crucifixion. Imagine you were there with the other disciples and Jesus.

It is the feast of the Passover and Jesus had instructed Peter and John to go into Jerusalem and find a man He described. They found the man and then prepared for the feast in the upper guest room of the man’s house. Imagine you are there in this simple room, sitting on the floor around a table with Jesus and the other disciples. They have been following Jesus and have witnessed His love, compassion, humility, and miracles. Maybe you did not always understand why or what He was doing. Jesus had just washed the feet of His disciples!

Jesus had tried to prepare His followers for His death. He knew He was going to die, that one of His disciples would betray Him and another would deny they knew Him. He tried to prepare them for what was to come. Then Jesus tells them “Take and eat; this is my body” and “This is my blood.” Do you think that they understood that Jesus would be giving up His life to forgive theirs and all of mankind’s sins?

Each time we share Jesus’ body and blood we must remember the love and sacrifice that Jesus gave to us. It was His love for us that we need to carry in our hearts each and every day.

Good Friday, April 10

by Kim Merz

In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him. . . Hebrews 5:7-9

These passages are certainly attention getting! Reading this should help us to realize how much God must love us to have come into time as a man and remain as humbled as He did for our benefit.

There are a few things about these verses that are really cool. The first is that Jesus prayed even though He was God Himself. Jesus not only prayed, but He cried out. There are times in prayer when I assume that I must “cry out” because I’m afraid God won’t actually listen to me unless I do. But if there’s anyone who would have confidence that their prayers are being heard, it’s Jesus. It makes me think that His cries to God were not out of fear of not being heard, but out of passion and deep love for the One who He was crying out to.

Another thing that’s great about these passages is that it doesn’t say Jesus’ prayers were heard by God because He’s Jesus - it says they were heard because of His “reverent submission”. His cries were heard by God because He chose to rid His heart of selfish ambition and entitlement and chose God’s way first. This is good news because this is something God also can call us to do, which means our prayers and petitions will be heard by God like Jesus’ if we cry out in reverent submission.

The third thing is that Jesus was made perfect through obedience. He did everything perfectly and died for us so that we, who have already failed, could enter the presence of God. It wasn’t about how powerful Jesus was or how many miracles He performed, it was about His obedience. When God told Him to perform a miracle, He did and when God told Him to die on a cross, He did. To Jesus, it was always about God’s kingdom advancing, not about showing His own power.

Today and always, may we remember how powerful true obedience to God can be.

Prayer:

Dearest Jesus, thank you for suffering and dying for me, a sinner. Amen.

Holy Saturday, April 11

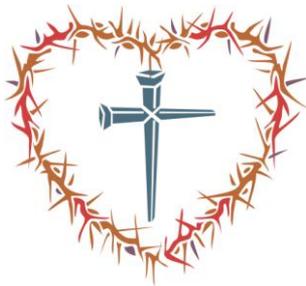
by Deacon Anthony Cavaliere

***“The LORD reigns; he is robed in majesty;
the LORD is robed; he has put on strength as his belt.
Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved. Psalm 93:1***

When we contemplate what the world calls “the forces of nature” such as storms, earthquakes, tornadoes, and tsunamis we might tend to think that all is chaos; that all events are random. Because of such chaos, many believe that there is either no God at all, or if there is, He has limited control and influence over what happens.

Paradoxically, when many ponder the scientific predictions of possible doomsday caused by climate change, they tend to think we human beings can effectively control such chaos. We do not need God to prevent doomsday. We can do it all on our own.

Psalm 93 tells us otherwise. It both humbles and comforts, for in the face of what we deem chaos, God proclaims that He is in control of the whole universe and all that is in it. He made everything. He makes order out of chaos. He is in control of all things that happen and nothing takes Him by surprise or accident. And because He is indeed Almighty, He is able to protect and carry us through all adversity. As He has shown in the past, He is also able to grant justice and uphold righteousness in every situation. He does not compromise or make deals. He punishes those who disobey Him but grants mercy to those He loves. God recompenses all human beings for their sins. The ones who are truly blessed are those who have their sins atoned for by Jesus who paid the price for all mankind on the cross.



Easter Sunday, April 12

by Pastor John Hopkins

“...but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead.”

Acts 10:40-42 (ESV)

It's in the detail. Did you catch it in there?

Sure it says that God raised Him on the third day...made Him to appear. Yes, this is speaking about the resurrection. Jesus rose from the grave alive. All amazing things.

But did you catch a simple detail that really emphasizes something?

“...who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.”

Jesus rose from the dead alright, but He was there in a real body. He ate food and had something to drink. A real person does that. Jesus was real. He was back from the dead and EATING food. This was no spirit. Jesus rose bodily from the grave. He is a living breathing, human eating man and He is at the same time, our God and Lord too!

This is the Good News we share! Jesus went through the horrible punishment as a human being to take away our sins. Now we share in His victory over sin and death, because He rose bodily from the grave. Thereby, giving us hope that one day we too will bodily rise from the dead and spend our eternal days with Him in heaven.

Now think about the reminder we have the next time you are at the communion rail. Remember that body and blood in the bread and wine, is indeed a foretaste of the feast to come! We, one day, will be eating food and having drink with our Savior Jesus Christ who truly rose from the grave alive! Alleluia! Amen!

