

A Walk in the Word

Personal Reflections for the Lenten Season

*Written by Members of Trinity United Methodist Church
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INTRODUCTION

Rev. Dr. Matthew M. Williams, Senior Pastor

Lent is upon us, beginning with Ash Wednesday, March 5, 2025. This marks the start of a sacred season of penitence, spiritual centering, and preparation for Easter. The forty days of Lent, excluding Sundays, echo the Israelites' forty years in the desert and Jesus' forty days of fasting in the wilderness. Lent invites us to enter a time of reflection, self-examination, and repentance. It allows us to confront the depth of our estrangement from God and actively seek reconciliation. The disciplines of Lent help us turn our hearts more fully toward Christ, preparing us to celebrate His life, death, and resurrection. As we read together as a community of faith, we are reminded that this season is about deepening our relationship with Jesus and transforming our lives in light of His sacrifice and love.

This year, we will focus on the Seven Last Words of Christ—His final phrases spoken from the cross. These words, rich with meaning, offer us a transformative invitation for personal reflection. Amid our busy lives, it's easy to become distracted by external events and political concerns, but Lent calls us to listen intently to what Jesus is saying to us in our hearts right now. Each day, as we reflect on one of Jesus' last words, we will engage with a verse and an author that invites transformation. Through this shared devotional journey, let us connect with Christ and one another, offering support and encouragement. Together, let us embrace this sacred season of worship, growth, and service and allow the words of Christ to guide us toward more profound spiritual renewal.

Prayer: Lord, help us listen to Christ's words and each other's words, and allow them to transform our lives. May this Lenten journey draw us closer to You, shaping us into vessels of Your grace and peace. Amen.



ASH WEDNESDAY
Wednesday, March 5, 2025
Chris LaFever

Yet even now, says the LORD, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; Joel 2:12

Today, this verse challenges me.

Return to the Lord.

That phrase has been a call of many prophets, yet I am no Israelite in tribulation, nor in concern of imminent foreign invasion, nor in exile. What do these words have to do with me? As I wrestle with this and with God, I recognize my defensiveness. Maybe I am a goat in Matthew 25 asking, “When did I see you?,” “Why do I need to return?,” “When did I leave?”. As I try to let my guard down, I sit with the verse in a different light.

Return to me

God is calling me in. There is still a sense of conviction in the call, but it is also an invitation to be with God. Even with the good things I am trying to do... “Return to me”. Even with the evil I cast aside... “Return to me”. Even with the strides I have made... “Return to me”.

With all your heart

I want “all my heart being with God” to be a destination. However, I am challenged by the very conversations I have with my students about wellness; it is a continual journey not a destination. I wish I could say look at all the devotion of my heart and life; I have unlocked the “Heart of God” achievement. Yet, I recognize the wandering of my heart and challenge myself not only walk up to God but walk with God.

Yet even now

God is not done with me. In this verse, and in this lent season, I am challenged to not rest on my laurels. Even as God has already transformed my life, God continues to challenge me to let myself be further transformed.

Prayer: Transforming God, help me to know even as you pour your grace over me, you have a vision for me that is larger than what I see. Help me to yield to your will. Amen

Thursday, March 6, 2025
Fain Folsom

“Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy, blot out my transgressions.” Psalm 51:1

This verse is part of an achingly deep emotional psalm attributed to King David, written after his grievous sins of adultery with Bathsheba and his fully orchestrated murder of her husband, Uriah, were exposed to all by the prophet Nathan. The psalm is David's plea for forgiveness. David begins his plea in verse 1 of the Psalm, by directly addressing God and His ability to grant mercy.

David's sins were “some bad ones.” I admit to mixed feelings when thinking about David and how his life is glorified in Judeo Christian history for the good he did for his people. I (a human being with my own many forgiven sins) can't fathom forgiving someone for planned murder! But God did. God can and will forgive US for any sin when we earnestly repent. While God forgives us, He does not always ease the earthly consequences of our sin. David's life and family were never the same because of what he had done. (I keep thinking of the Prayer that Jesus gave us when we pray to God “... lead us not into temptation, rather, deliver us from evil ... “. What if those words had been on David's heart, what if he had recited them since he was a child?)

An even more profound sign of God's grace for His people has now been given to us for our times: Christ Jesus who lived a sinless life and gave it up on the cross for us. So that through Him, we could be reconciled with the Father. Mercy and Unfailing Love.

Prayer: Abba Father, create in me a pure heart and renew a steadfast spirit in me. In Christ's name we pray. Amen



Friday, March 7, 2025

Dan Drake

“Against you, you alone, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are justified in your sentence and blameless when you pass judgment.”

Psalm 51:4

Have you ever done something so wrong that it repeatedly haunts your consciousness? I have. Sometimes I tell myself that it wasn't some violent or hateful act, no one got physically hurt, but upon reflection, what I did was worse. I treated someone who liked me with a disregard for their feelings and hurt them in a way that no one deserved.

King David did something like that but with much more malice and evil intent. He sent Uriah, the husband of his mistress Bath-sheba to the front line of the worst fighting of his army to surely die. This was his favored general and friend, unfortunately caught in the path of David's desire.

In this psalm, King David realizes, not only did he commit a terrible act that was wrong in so many ways, but most importantly he sinned against God and David's own moral code. He acknowledged his sin, recognized its wrongness, and sought God's forgiveness.

Prayer: Lord, I am ashamed of my sin and I commend my transgressions to You asking that you restore me to be worthy of your service.



Saturday, March 8, 2025

Bob Tindale

“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.”

Psalm 51:10

King David was coming to grips with the brokenness in his life and he cried out to God for mercy. In verse 10 he asked God to go even deeper than forgiving him, he asked God to “create in him a new heart and to renew the spirit within”. David was asking God to change him from the inside out.

A clean heart... as we grow closer to God, I find that my brokenness becomes more apparent to me. That may seem negative, but not really because with it I understand more and more His forgiveness. Therefore we cry out with David who knew both his own brokenness and God’s loving grace.

This is beyond the ‘score sheet’ that so many somehow feel God keeps. This is instead, the freedom that God offers all of us. This is the God who knows us better than we know ourselves and loves us totally.

This is the cry for an acceptance of real freedom, for a clean heart. As we reflect on the meaning of Lent, may David’s life and words remind us of God’s amazing grace.

Prayer: Dear God, with David we cry out, create in me a clean heart, restore Your Spirit in me. May I walk more closely with You today and may I accept Your forgiveness more completely. Amen.



THE FIRST WORD

“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”

Luke 23:34



Sunday, March 9, 2025
Patty Daniels

“The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He will not always accuse, nor will he keep his anger forever. He does not deal with us according to our sins nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far he removes our transgressions from us.” Psalm 103:8-12

Psalm 103 is a song of praise. The psalmist implores us, as Bishop Berlin reminded us in our Bicentennial sermon, to “remember to not forget” the many blessings God has bestowed on us.

The psalm begins by calling on us to “Bless the Lord, O my soul and all that is in me.” Bless our bodies, bless our families and relationships, bless our work places and homes. Bless our lives. Remember that God loves us and claims us as beloved children. It is right to bless the Lord.

But in our broken world today, it is often hard to “remember to not forget” God’s blessings. So many horrible actions compete, and often demand our attention. Wars, extreme weather events, job insecurities, justice issues, financial problems, divisive issues in our country, all crowd our minds, and block God’s call to sing this song of praise.

Fortunately embedded in this Psalm is God’s answer to how we deal with the brokenness in our lives. “The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.” We are not alone. God is already handling our brokenness. God can handle our anger, our confusion, our pain. The steadfast love of God is always with us. Lent is a time to both acknowledge the pain in our lives and to open ourselves to God’s presence and blessings. We need to “remember to not forget” that God is present in all of our chaos.

Prayer: *Thank you, God for your unconditional, constant steadfast love. Amen.*



Monday, March 10, 2025

Kathy Drake

“Come now, let us argue it out says the LORD: If your sins are like scarlet, will they become like snow? If they are red like crimson will they become like wool?” Isaiah 1:18

Although this verse should be comforting, sometimes I feel unworthy of God’s grace and forgiveness. Past transgressions (not to mention present failings) hang on like toilet paper stuck to the bottom of my shoe! I can’t quite shake them off and it’s hard to accept God wiping my slate clean. I imagine, for some with more “serious transgressions,” this is an impossible truth to fathom, and my judgmental self finds it difficult as well.

The above verse in Isaiah follows a lengthy condemnation from God to the children of Israel, who had rebelled against Him and suffered the consequences. Their land was in ruins and ravaged by foreigners. He didn’t want their animal sacrifices and festivals. He wanted them to stop doing wrong and learn to do right. He promises them all good things if they are willing and obedient. If God was ready to forgive the people of Israel, will he not forgive me and my failings as well?

The words “argue it out” are interesting. I can picture Him sitting in a room with me as I numerate my many past sins as He continues to repeat, “Though your sins are scarlet, they shall be like snow. Stop arguing with me and just accept this gift!” He knows this is an important step before we can move on and do better... stop doing wrong and learn to do right. So pull the plug and let those negative thoughts flow out to be replaced with new, positive intentions! We forgive and forget our own children’s failings, so why would we expect less of our Father?

Prayer: *Lord, forgive us for our many sins and make them like snow. Amen.*



Tuesday, March 11, 2025

Daniel Diaz

“Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of his possession? He does not retain his anger forever because he delights in showing steadfast love. He will again have compassion upon us; he will tread our iniquities under foot. You will cast all our[a] sins into the depths of the sea.” Micah 7:18-19

Micah 7:18-19 paints a breathtaking portrait of God’s character, etched in mercy and full of compassion. When the prophet asks, “Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of his possession?” I imagine his original audience, the people of Judah, facing the consequences of their broken covenant with God. They had witnessed the destruction of their land, the scattering of their people, and the weight of their sin bearing down upon them. Micah’s words weren’t just theological pronouncements; they were a lifeline thrown into a sea of despair. They were a reminder that even in the face of divine judgment, God’s essential nature remained one of boundless mercy, and a mercy that actively delights in forgiveness.

This passage resonates deeply within our own lives, doesn’t it? We, too, experience the sting of our own shortcomings, the weight of choices that lead us astray. We know the shame of failing to live up to the standards we set for ourselves, let alone the perfect standard of God’s holiness. Like the Israelites, we can feel lost and adrift, convinced that our mistakes have irrevocably separated us from divine love. Thankfully, Micah’s words echo across the centuries, a powerful reminder that God’s mercy is not a finite resource, but an inexhaustible spring. He doesn’t simply tolerate us; He delights in showing us compassion. The image of casting our sins into the depths of the sea is a powerful one. It speaks of complete forgiveness, a removal of our transgressions so thorough that they are irretrievable, lost forever in the vastness of God’s grace.

Reflecting on these verses, I am struck by the sheer audacity of God’s love. It’s a love that doesn’t minimize the seriousness of sin, but rather chooses to overcome it with overwhelming mercy. It’s a love that doesn’t just forgive individual acts, but actively subdues our iniquities, working within us to transform us from the inside out. This isn’t a passive forgiveness, but an active, transformative love that seeks to restore us to wholeness. How have you experienced this kind of radical forgiveness in your own life? What would it look like for you to more fully embrace the depth of God’s mercy and allow it to transform you?

Prayer: Dear God, you are good. You are full of grace and mercy. As we prepare for the celebration of the resurrection, let us understand the weight of your sacrifice and the depth of your love, and let us be transformed by it. Amen.



Wednesday, March 12, 2025

Mike Marschall

“For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. Matthew 6:14-15

This verse in the Gospel of Matthew comes right after Jesus instructs his disciples as to how they should pray, an instruction now known as The Lord’s Prayer. The fact that forgiveness is a prominent part of The Lord’s Prayer shows how important that act is to God. It is an act of love.

Later in Matthew’s Gospel, a Pharisee (someone noted in those days to be an expert in the law) asked Jesus to state which of the commandments is the greatest of all. The Pharisee was likely well versed in the Ten Commandments and those aspects of the law enumerated in the Torah. Jesus replied with a succinct answer based upon love, not law: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” And he added something he considered equally important, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” In other words, if you expect other people to love you, you must love other people.

I see forgiveness as a key part of the message God communicates to us through his son, Jesus Christ. That message is that God the Father is love, and God the Son is the living embodiment of that love. God loves us and forgives us, and Jesus came to show us how to love. In The Lord’s Prayer we ask for forgiveness followed by a request for it to be given to us in the same manner as we forgive others. If we genuinely love God and want his forgiveness, how can we not forgive someone who has hurt us in some way? Don’t we want the same forgiveness when we hurt someone?

Many of us struggle to forgive when we are hurt. Some of us refuse to forgive because we feel it is not deserved or has not been earned. We may also believe that it is not our place to forgive. How many times have we heard a person who has been hurt by someone use the phrase, “God many forgive, but I will not.” When we refuse to forgive because we do not believe the person deserves it, we withhold love from someone. We are not loving our neighbor as ourselves.

In my life, it is not a struggle for me to forgive. I have a hard time understanding why people cannot or will not forgive. There are certain unspeakable, and even what may be called unforgiveable things done by others to us or to those we love, things that in our humanity make forgiveness difficult. Forgiveness does not and should not minimize or excuse the horrible behavior of others. And healing from what may have been done to us by someone does not come easy or quick, but forgiveness starts that process of healing.

Forgiveness makes you feel uplifted, as negative thoughts we have about those who hurt us dissipate, and the shackles holding us down from our true selves are removed. I believe that this uplifting feeling is God acting through the Holy Spirit, filling us with grace when we act out of love for our neighbor, just as Christ taught us and our Heavenly Father expects us to act. We may hold on to our forgiveness because we believe it has not been earned or is not deserved. But we can act out of love and forgive. We can show others what it means to live like Christ and forgive others as our Heavenly Father forgives us. After all, He forgives us even if we feel we have not earned it or do not deserve it.

“To err is human; to forgive, divine.” – Alexander Pope

Prayer: Lord, may we always be filled with your grace and mercy, so that we may forgive others as you have forgiven us. Help us to be like that example of human love, your son Jesus, who while among us demonstrated your forgiveness, and taught us that to forgive is a true act of love for our neighbor. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.



Thursday, March 13, 2025

Starr and Randy Clay

“Then Peter came and said to him, “Lord, if my brother or sister sins against me, how often should forgive? As many as seven times?” Jesus said to him, “Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.” Matthew 18:21-22

Christ’s answer was not aimed at instructing Peter that it was time to start a tally sheet and when he had forgiven seventy times seven (almost 500 times), he had settled his obligation to forgive.

Instead, Christ was pointing out that humans have a hard time letting go of hurts. Even when true forgiveness has been given, time and circumstances can cause the old resentments and need for revenge to rear their ugly heads and we have to allow the Holy Spirit to lead us into true forgiveness all over again---and again and again if necessary. Christ’s instruction is aimed at making us whole, not just our relationship with the offender.

But it’s also important to remember what Christ was not saying. Christ’s plan never included allowing those who hurt us to make us victims over and over again. Yes, we must work to truly forgive them. But allowing them to mentally, spiritually or physically abuse us is not part of forgiveness. Indeed, we cannot be a part of the reform that needs to take place in the offender’s life if we are unable to truly forgive them then remove ourselves from their emotional reach. Psychotherapists know that unless the victim can reach true forgiveness, their own healing from abuse cannot be accomplished.

So what is true forgiveness? It means willfully putting aside feelings of resentment toward someone who has committed a wrong, been unfair or hurtful, or otherwise harmed you in some way. Forgiveness is not merely accepting what happened or ceasing to be angry. Rather, it involves a voluntary transformation of your feelings, attitudes, and behavior, so that you are no longer dominated by resentment and can express compassion, generosity, or the like toward the person who wronged you.

Seventy times seven is a lifetime of forgiveness.

Prayer: Jesus, please help me to annihilate the feelings of resentment, revenge and anger that want to live in my memory and lead me into the true healing forgiveness that you spoke for me from the cross. Amen



Friday, March 14, 2025

David Hortin

“For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. 8 But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.” Romans 5:6-8

How do you know when someone loves you? Because they sent you a Valentine card? Well, that is a good positive sign. But, really, that is not too costly. It is thoughtful when we express our love in words. Of course, deeds are even better.

Take a leap forward in the ultimate expression of love is to give one’s life for some one or some cause. Good parents express this love in many ways over many years. Teachers and other, in their life’s work, live out their love for others.

And Jesus says, “Greater love has no one than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” I think of my cousin, Jimmy Roosevelt, who died on New Georgia Island in the Pacific in World War II. Most of us know of people who gave their lives for some great cause.

Now, most importantly, God the Creator loves us in spite of our waywardness and shortcomings. The confirmation of this is His give of Jesus as evidenced in some of the great affirmations, such as John’s gospel (John 3:16):

For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son...”

We also read in Romans 5:6-8 when the apostle Paul, introducing himself to the Christians in Rome, writes:

“God proves his love for us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

One of the great themes of the New Testament is unmerited love. The word for that is “Grace.” Christians have often sung about it. As children in Sunday School, we sang “Jesus loves me; this I know, for the Bible tells me so.” In our hymns, we sing about the difference God’s love and grace make in our lives—as in this third verse of “Amazing Grace”

“Through many dangers, toils, and snares, I have already come.

‘Tis grace hath brought me save thus far; and grace will lead me home.”

Prayer: *Gracious God, we give thanks for your love and pray that you help us bless all with your love and grace. In the name of Jesus. Amen.*



Saturday, March 15, 2025
John and Beth Anne Trombetta

“Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.” Ephesians 4:31-32

This passage sets the tone for the Lenten season. We mourn the death of Jesus, and we celebrate his resurrection. His death was the redemption for all of us. He paid for our sins. We are forgiven!

The instruction is simple, but the application is hard. It is hard to see that the most indignant act, the act that challenges our values the most, the act that hurts our heart, is to be forgiven. What’s more is that we are to be kind to the person who says things we don’t like; the person who puts forward hate and vitriol and supports everything we are against; the person who is unclean, unhoused and asking for change and making us feel uncomfortable; the person who has wronged us, hurt us, perhaps even intentionally. And yes, the person in the mirror is most definitely the same person who needs to receive kindness.

We were not told to be kind, tenderhearted and forgiving only to those who “deserve” it. For we aren’t the judge of that. It’s a simple task, but sometimes not an easy one. We remember Christ’s sacrifice during our Lenten season and celebrate his resurrection, that’s simple. Remembering it at other times, especially when faced with those who have hurt us, or that disagree with us, or who don’t support our values is hard. The good news is, we are made in Christ’s image, and he gives us strength to handle the challenge to be kind and to forgive.

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for your sacrifice. Continue to give us strength to be kind and forgiving. Help us to remember that doing this is pleasing to you and is recognition of you paying the price for all our sins. In your name we pray, Amen.



THE SECOND WORD

“Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

Luke 23:43



Sunday, March 16, 2025

Paula Smith

“I keep the LORD always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices; my body also rests secure. For you do not give me up to Sheol, or let your faithful one see the Pit. You show me the path of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy; in your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” Psalm 16:8-11

My world always feels like it is in a spin... so many tasks before me, too little time for all that is needed. I'm afraid. How can I meet the expectations, accomplish the tasks when I feel uncertain and lacking?

I have found the answer. The source for comfort and guidance lies in prayer and petition. When I feel overwhelmed or unqualified, I remember God's power. Time spent with our Lord, saves time wasted in my own weak efforts. Every morning, every evening as I look ahead, I ask for help. As the Psalm promises, the Holy One will not abandon me. He is always present.

I'm older now. I have seen and felt His presence. I know His guidance comforts me, calms me and helps me in every circumstance. I want to always remember to spend the time to be present with Him and ask for His leading and guiding hand in all that is before me.

Prayer: *Holy Father, please guide me and order my days. I will put my faith in you. When I lack the strength and courage to meet the challenges before me, I know you will show me the way to face what lies ahead. All honor and praise in your name, Amen.*



Monday, March 17, 2025

Anne Godbold

“He will swallow up death forever. Then the Lord GOD will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken. It will be said on that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us. This is the LORD for whom we have waited; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation. Isaiah 25:7-9

Isaiah says in verse 7: *He will swallow up on this mountain the veil that is veiling all peoples, the shroud enshrouding all nation. Isaiah sees that the nations of the world are under a funeral pall and God enters and rips it away. God did this because death is now no more. And in doing so God swallowed death up and then with God’s Heavenly Kleenex, wipes away the tears from all our faces.*

One of the interesting things about the Hebrews at this time in history was that they were totally uninterested in death. The Egyptians spent much of their time preparing for the rituals of death and so the afterlife was extremely important to them. Therefore, death dominated their lives. The same was true for the Babylonians to the east of them and the Hittites to the north. The Hebrews were an exception to all of this and didn’t worry about building elaborate and ornate tombs. Typically, a pile of rocks would mark the grave or perhaps a place in the side of a mountain would be the tomb. They simply were not concerned about death.

The Hebrews however were concerned about God and God’s action in this life, not the next. To them, God was a living God in the here and now, actively involved in the present. This is something for us to remember today as well; our relationship is with a living God who had defeated death by Jesus’ death on the cross and his resurrection to new life. And because Jesus has defeated sin and death, our lives have eternal significance now and forever. Therefore no one, absolutely no one is expendable.

Prayer: *Dear God, help us to be in a living relationship with you, knowing that we are called to help others to realize that you are here to wipe the tears from all faces, those who look and act like us and those who don’t. Help us to be available to the whispers of your Holy Spirit in our lives to go where you send us with love and joy. Amen.*



Tuesday, March 18, 2025

Susan Moreton

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him.” John 3:16-17

This is probably the most well-known verse in the Bible and many of you like me learned these words in Sunday school as a child. But do we really understand the meaning of love that is spoken here? Do we fully understand the true meaning of God's love and the sacrifice of His Son coming to earth to give us hope and redemption, and a glimpse of a heavenly home for eternity that we can barely imagine? God's love is so overwhelming to me sometimes that I can scarcely take it in.

During Lent I am reminded of this all-consuming love of our Lord and I like to take time to stop and look at my own life and do an 'audit' of my faith and my walk. In this season I am reminded of the many times that I walk my own path and often do not feel the need to lean on my heavenly Father and let him lead the way. In those moments my life gets disorganized and more difficult. I need Lent and the promise of the Risen Savior to pull me back to sitting at the feet of my Lord and sharing the difficult times and thanking him for the joys that are around me even in hard times. With Him I can face whatever this life brings and even though I stumble many times I know I have a loving God to return to and sit awhile and listen and feel His presence and His love. May you too find peace and quiet moments with the Lord this Lenten season.

Prayer: Lord, may we come to you each day bringing our hopes, fears, and joys and resting in you and being renewed. Amen.



Wednesday, March 19, 2025

Susan Koehler

“My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand.”

John 10:27-28

Chirp-weo-weo. Our home sits adjacent to a small family cemetery and its thick buffer of protective trees. It was from those trees that I first heard the sound. It echoed again and again in the twilight – *chirp-weo-weo, chirp-weo-weo.* I could not see the source of the sound, but I grew to rely on this comforting cadence that rang from the depths of a dark forest. Curious and enchanted, I did some research and learned that I was listening to the song of the Chuck-will’s-widow, a nocturnal, migratory bird of the nightjar family. Engines rumbled in the distance and sirens sometimes blared, but if I listened for the call of my melodious friend, the noise of the world faded and I found peace. Eventually, the weather cooled, the seasons changed, and the woods grew silent. But every March, the Chuck-will’s-widow returned, and I knew of its presence when I heard its voice.

John 10:27-28, begins with a simple, declarative sentence: “My sheep hear my voice.” There are so many voices, so many sounds, competing for our attention. We hear and we react. We hear and we question. We hear and we panic. But if we allow ourselves to be curious and enchanted, to listen and learn, we can discern the voice we most need to hear. The voice that comforts and guides. The voice that draws us out of the temporal and into the eternal. The voice that offers peace. As seasons change and I listen for the return of the Chuck-will’s-widow, I am reminded that the voice I most long to hear is ever present, just waiting for me to listen.

Prayer: *Lord, amid the worrisome noises of this world, help me to discern your voice, to follow your call, and to rest in the peace of your presence. Amen*



Thursday, March 20, 2025
Stewart Fleming

“For we know that, if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

II Corinthians 5:1

When I think of our earthly bodies, I am amazed at their diversity and resilience. Some of us are born with very frail bodies that struggle with pain and infirmity. Others, like those of elite athletes, seem to be almost super human and indestructible. As we age, we all face the same eventuality regarding our earthly bodies. What great hope and promise this epistle from the apostle Paul provides! As Jesus demonstrated by his resurrection, our new bodies will be very different.

Paul continues in verse 5:3,5-6, “For we will not be spirits without bodies...God himself has prepared us for this, and as a guarantee he has given us his Holy Spirit. So we are always confident, even though we know that as long as we live in these bodies we are not at home with the Lord.” Therefore, it makes perfect sense that we have such troubles with these earthly bodies. “But this precious treasure - this light and power that now shine within us - is held in perishable containers, that is, in our weak bodies.” (2 Cor 4:7)

Those of us who know and love the Lord can live confidently that God will clothe us with our new perfect bodies so that we can live forever with him in heaven. With the Holy Spirit’s help we can survive and thrive through our present troubles. “In the same way that gold and silver are refined by fire, the Lord purifies your heart by the tests and trials of life.” (Proverbs 17:3)

We can take great comfort in God’s promises and in the example that Jesus showed us that death of our earthly bodies is not the end, but the beginning of new and better life forever!

Prayer: Our Father in heaven, we thank you for this gift of life on Earth that you have given us in order to come to know you and love you with all our heart, mind, soul and strength. We thank you also for the gift of the Holy Spirit and for the example of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection. We look forward to spending eternity with you in heaven. For now we pray for your forgiveness and for the faith to carry on and do the good works which you would have us do. In your mighty name we pray. Amen.



Friday, March 21, 2025

Marti Chumbler

“For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me, yet I cannot say which I will choose. I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.” Philippians 1:22-23

I am fortunate enough to have several fruit trees in my yard and some of them annually produce an overabundance of fruit. In the summer, I pour over recipes for recipes using figs and cram my cabinets with multiple versions of fig jams (fig strawberry, fig ginger, etc.). I invite friends over to pick however many they want. In the fall and winter, I hand out pink grapefruit to anyone expressing the least interest. I even keep a carton parked by my mailbox laden with grapefruit and with a sign attached saying “help yourselves.” Those two trees are definitely “fruitful.” I also squeeze gallons of orange juice both for Brent and me and for other family members. These trees are literally fruitful.

Others of my fruit trees are less productive. My two pear trees, between them, yielded three pears last year. My peach tree produces lots of peaches, but they’re very small and often filled with worms. My plum tree has yet to give me a single plum, although admittedly the squirrels have enjoyed a few green ones.

But how fruitful am I? And what kind of fruit does my labor produce? If I’m honest, I think I often fall somewhere in the group with the pears and the peaches. I get a few things right but also sometimes engage in a flurry of activity that really doesn’t amount to much or is, figuratively speaking, full of worms. Or I’m like the plum tree, I get started, but my actions never ripen into mature fruit.

While I’m only occasionally successful, I strive to live a life that is abundantly fruitful, a life that bears the fruit of faith to such a measure that it overflows into the lives of others. “If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me . . .”

Prayer: Dear Father, help me be more fruitful. Help me to live a life of faith so abundant that its fruits reflect the boundless love of Christ . Amen.



Saturday, March 22, 2025

Russ Mick

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.’” Revelation 21:1-4

Revelation 21: 1-4 is such a momentous piece of scripture.

The moment we're in, the chaos of this world, is at times overwhelming. Our ancestors no doubt had similar challenges as well. It's easy to forsake our daily walk with Christ and let the absurdities of humankind dominate our lives. May we not let this happen. I'm called to make a commitment with God, to put God first. This means that I need intentionality on my part to correct my habits. I need to have the self-discipline to make sure that the information I ingest and the words that I utter are pleasing in God's sight. Let me make decisions and commitments that feed the soul, that strengthen my connection with Jesus.

At some point we will transition from this current earth. Revelation 21: 1-4 is a harbinger. The thought of a new heaven and earth where we can be with God sounds so amazing, so wonderful! What a God we serve that once again, he will choose to dwell with us. But as Jesus became incarnate, his time here on earth was finite, in the new heaven and earth, God will dwell with us in eternity. I will keep my eye on this lighthouse, this beacon of truth!

Prayer: Lord, thank you for loving a sinner like me. I employ thee to lead me where you want me, and remind me what humility looks like. Amen



THE THIRD WORD

“Woman, here is your son...Here is your mother”

John 19:26-27



Sunday, March 23, 2025

James Hunt

“Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.” Exodus 20:12

Like many readers of this Lenten study who also grew up in Deep South, my earliest recollections of the 5th commandment came with a clear goal of avoiding corporal punishment. As a child, my more basic understanding of the commandment was best put as “OBEY Your Parents” with an emphatic “Or ELSE!” added to the end just to be sure. As I reflect on this commandment today, years removed from my own childhood and as a parent myself, I find that the significance of this commandment has much less to do with doing what you’re told and instead is a critical part of how we seek to live according to God’s will.

Honoring our parents is a much more profound act than simple obedience. The Ancient Greek word often translated as honor is *tamaō*, which means to hold in honor, show respect, and give recognition. And while deference through obedience is one way to show respect, I have found that the true spiritual impact of this commandment is a call for us to cultivate gratitude not only for our parents but all those who have guided and nurtured us throughout our lives.

Reflecting on this concept more directly, I find myself pondering some tough questions. How do we live out this commandment to honor people in our lives when relationships have become difficult? After all, the commandment does not come with a qualifier of “only when times are good.” Are there issues in our own lives that we need to address so that we may truly honor people in our lives? There may be times when honoring others requires forgiveness, patience, setting aside pride, or an outright reexamination of our own spiritual lives. Maybe that is the whole point of this commandment. God calls us to honor others so that we act in ways that draw us closer to Him. By honoring our father and mother, we don’t just obey them; we reflect God’s love and live more fully according to His will.

Prayer: Lord, help me to honor those who have guided and nurtured me, even when it is difficult, so that my actions may reflect Your love and draw me closer to You. Amen.

Monday, March 24, 2025

Alicia Whittington

“But Ruth said, “Do not press me to leave you, to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people and your God my God. Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried. May the LORD do thus to me, and more as well, if even death parts me from you!” Ruth 1:16-17

The year 2022 was chaotic for me. I received a devastating health diagnosis, the world was emerging from a pandemic, and my church left me. I cannot quite remember the order in which it all happened—it was a lot to process at the time. But I do remember this: despite my deep dislike for change, I could handle the healthcare side of things. That world made sense to me. I spoke the language and felt confident in clinically navigating my diagnosis.

But the church. My church. The building I had entered at least once a week for 23 years. That was different. It was unraveling in a hostile, hate-filled, heartbreaking way. This was the place where I raised my family—where I stood as a newlywed, celebrated baptisms, and watched confirmations. The place where I shed tears while singing during worship. The place where my heart burst with pride as my daughters walked the center aisle as acolytes.

And suddenly, it was slipping away.

I no longer recognized the people I had been entwined with for decades. I found myself in a sea of unsympathetic strangers, in awe that “we” were in this spot. These people, once my community, now felt smug and condescending. I was filled with conflict and deep sorrow. I was sickened, and so, I left.

In doing so, I found my beloved Trinity United Methodist Church.

Ruth 1:16-17 speaks of loyalty and faith while trusting God’s plan even in difficult times. The story of Ruth reminds us that hardships are opportunities to turn to God, to lean into faith. She suffered the loss of her husband and faced a choice: return to the comfort and familiarity of her family or stay with her mother-in-law, stepping into an unknown future.

Ruth’s decision to embrace the unknown is a powerful reminder that following Jesus often requires us to let go of certain things such as relationships, habits, even places we once called home—to pursue what is good and true. Though painful in the short term, the Holy Spirit strengthens us to endure, knowing that on the other side of loss is the joy of realizing we are cherished children of God. Ruth’s story challenges us to see change not as something to fear but as a path to deeper faith.

Prayer: Dear Lord, you who are kind and filled with peace, may we, like Ruth, navigate this world towards what is good, even when that is difficult. It is in your Holy name we pray. Amen.

Tuesday, March 25, 2025
Britton Stacey

“Father of orphans and protector of widows is God in his holy habitation. God gives the desolate a home to live in; he leads out the prisoners to prosperity, but the rebellious live in a parched land.” Psalm 68:5-6

Psalm 68: 5-6 says “Father of orphans and protector of widows is God in his holy habitation.” I look around in this world where so many people are struggling, whether they are by themselves, have no one to protect them, or they are sick or forgotten about. We must remember there is always going to be someone with us, and that person is God. I read this verse and I am relieved by the understanding that I have an ultimate protector, someone who will lead me out of whatever struggle I might have, a God that understands that while our universe is ever changing, that there are always going to be those who need that protection.

Psalm 68: 5-6 gives me a reason to celebrate everything that God has blessed me with. God gave us the death of Jesus so we would be protected and could live. Jesus, God’s only son was sacrificed so that God had the opportunity to lead us out of whatever is dragging us down. As we enter this time of Lent, celebration is what comes across my mind. An opportunity to thank Jesus and God for their ultimate sacrifice, a sacrifice that leads us the people to always be protected and loved. I encourage us to enter every day and remembering that not only are we loved, but every person we encounter is protected by God.

Prayer: Lord, I give thanks to you for always being there for us, for giving us someone to lean upon even when times are the hardest. Amen



Wednesday, March 26, 2025
Bud Glenn

“If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion—how can God’s love be in that person? Dear children, let’s not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions.” 1 John 3:17-18

God’s love is such a marvelous thing! Ironically, we have just studied “God’s love” in our Sunday School class. “As Christians, we should be a window into the Kingdom. When people come to church our greatest hope should be that we are good representatives of God’s grace. We have the opportunity to prove that Christian love, agape, is blind.

Matthew 5: says this: . . . 43 “You have heard the law that says, ‘Love your neighbor’ [c] and hate your enemy. 44 But I say, love your enemies! [d] Pray for those who persecute you! 45 In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust alike.

If we see our brother or sister (other persons) in need and we show no compassion, are we not disobeying Jesus’ teachings in that part of “The Sermon on the Mount” in Matthew? May we forever show that love of Christ that indwells in us; that window into the Kingdom.

Prayer: God of Grace and Mercy, make us people of grace and love in all that we do; love our neighbors, and all those in need. In the name of Christ we pray. Amen



Thursday, March 27, 2025
Lori Simpson Keller

“But to the one who had told him this, Jesus[a] replied, “Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?”⁹ And pointing to his disciples, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.” Matthew 12:48-50

After reading these verses, and the few preceding ones, in several different translations, I don't think Jesus was replacing, disowning, or disrespecting his biological family. I believe he was adding to his family those he had come to know and love and with whom he had lived and traveled. His message was obedience is thicker than blood.

Our family has a group of friends we call our Family of Choice. For many years, these twelve or so people joined us every Sunday after church for lunch, pool time (weather permitting), games, movies, and dinner if we didn't want the day to end too soon. We all did a few Bible studies together, including our middle school, high school and young adult children. We had a few staycations, Spring Breaks and July 4th holidays together at our house and at the beach. We went on a couple of trips to the mountains to play in the snow, all squeezing into two side-by-side condos. We've celebrated birthdays and weddings, supported one another during challenging times, and spoken truth in love to one another when the situation called for it.

What has kept us together is our love for each other and our love for the Lord. In spite of our humanness, we live trying our best with His help to follow His will, to live out His commandment to love one another.

Prayer: *Jesus, thank you for the example of loving others well and for building a Family of Choice with those You have put in our life. Help me to love them well. Help me also see those who need “family” and let me be an example of living a life following Your will. Amen*



Friday, March 28, 2025

Anna Brook Opalinski

“Honor widows who are really widows. If a widow has children or grandchildren, they should first learn their religious duty to their own family and make some repayment to their parents, for this is pleasing in God’s sight.”

I timothy 5:3-4

My mother has always told me that growing up, I had many personality traits that would serve me well in adulthood, but were very difficult to parent. We laugh now, but there was a time when my relationship with my parents was not always easy because of my behavior. As a teenager, I was in a stage of life where I thought that I knew best, that my mom couldn’t possibly understand me, and that if everyone would just leave me alone I could make the whole world better. It was a tough time for my mother and me. We were not friends in the slightest. Thankfully, as I got older, we learned how to communicate better and both of my parents are two of my best friends in the world.

Often, in our faith, we get so overwhelmed with the world that we forget to see where God is in it. We think that we know best and that if everyone would just leave us alone, we could solve all the world’s problems. But as we know, that is not the case. True faith requires that we rely on God in the world, even when it is a challenge to see the work of the Holy Spirit in the chaos of humanity. But this scripture passage reminds us that caring for our family and being respectful of the people around us is pleasing to God’s sight. It also helps us resettle our faith and ground ourselves once again in Christ. During this season of Lent, take time to pause and make sure that your faith is grounded, and if it seems like it might not be, start small. Do what is pleasing in God’s sight, and love those around you.

Prayer: Almighty God, we know that you are present in this world, even when all we can see are the bad things. We trust that when we see the marginalized and the poor, that you would remind us that simply loving and respecting them is a way to love and respect you, for it is through this simple act of caring that we find you in the world. It is in your Son’s name that we pray. Amen.



Saturday, March 29, 2025

Patty Williams

“Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself unstained by the world.” James 1:27

In my study Bible (NIV Foundation), it is stated that James, the author of this epistle, is growingly recognized as the brother of Jesus. He wrote about practical issues we face daily, like money, temptations, patience, good communication skills and how our faith should transfer into action and result in changed behavior.

This is one of my favorite books of the Bible for many reasons. My “practical” understanding of this particular scripture is not that James is putting a limit on who we need to care for; it’s for all in distress who need care. And... my understanding of the rest of James’s message is that our religion, our faith, our beliefs should translate into actions that are pleasing to God, even though they may not be pleasing to the world. We must strive to protect ourselves and others physically, emotionally and spiritually from the temptations of worldly thoughts contrary to God’s will.

In my Sunday School class, my eyes have been opened to many spiritual and worldly religious thoughts from a historical and current perspective. I am inclined to mostly think about the lessons and comments from a worldly and personal standpoint that are occurring presently in our everyday lives. The challenge is keeping those thoughts pure before God and not tainted by frustration, anger, malice or hurt, “worldly attributes”. James’s practical words say to me that we have a responsibility to help take care of each other in all our distresses and in our efforts to be pure before God in all things.

Prayer: Lord, you know our strengths and our weaknesses. You know our desire to be pure before you in all we think, feel, say and do. We pray for your grace, mercy, and guidance in helping us become the people you designed us to be. Amen



THE FOURTH WORD

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me.”

Matthew 27:46



Sunday, March 30, 2025

Leah Wiley

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night but find no rest.” Psalm 22:1-2

This passage by King David of the Old Testament – harkened by his descendant, The Christ, who ushered in the New Testament – is a jolting reminder of the agony and humiliation Jesus endured on the cross for my sake, which is deeply humbling. It is also relatable, because this was the very human aspect of Jesus crying out. The whipping; the taunting; the thorns; the weight of the cross; the climb; the ropes; and, finally, the nails: What human wouldn't cry out in pain and question God's love and protection? If, like me, you're compelled by the gripping arc of Jesus' ministry that carries us to this painful moment, you wonder the same thing, too: “My God! My God! Why have you forsaken me?”

Jesus was fully human and fully God. This is confusing and impossible; which makes it believable and real. It is an awesome and hopeful aspect of our faith that I cling to, and makes this moment in Jesus' story poignant. Jesus stood up for the poor, powerless commoner; but during his trial, these very people – who had only hours before honored him in a parade – used all their might to call for his punishment as a rebellion leader. In today's society, the cascade of “Crucify him!” is known as “working against your own self-interest.” Everything Jesus did was for their good; yet they demanded retribution that only sought to satisfy the powerful.

“My God! My God! Why have you forsaken me?” tells us that Jesus was in deep physical and emotional pain. The tears of the women who followed him up the hill gives us an opportunity to also weep for him, even as we celebrate each year this awesome historical event that saved our souls. I imagine that, in that moment, he needed the onlookers and their descendants to know that this was no easy task, and that his God aspect was committed to our deliverance, no matter our allegiance. And, in doing so, he was demonstrating his own teachings: that God is sovereign and worthy of our devotion, trust, and confidence – over and above Roman colonization, or any earthly governance, present or future. He needed us to understand that true leaders give their lives for their people – and not the other way around.

In a twist of omnipotent brilliance we can never comprehend in this realm, Jesus needed the powerless and the powerful to collaborate to make his crucifixion happen. Had he not suffered in this way, there would be no earthly death, no conquering of hell, and no resurrection – which in itself defies the human structures of logic, possibility, and justice.

Jesus' suffering reaches far beyond rules and values to exude The Trinity's unconditional love and infinite mercy. His divine leadership teaches us to be citizens of the world as representatives of Heaven.

And in this day and time, Jesus' misery on the cross fills me with hope amid the chaos.

Prayer: Dear Lord, thank you for your sacrifice on the Cross. Help us show our gratitude by loving our neighbors as ourselves and by allowing your love and mercy to rule over our lives. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.



Monday, March 31, 2025

Renee White

“Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise him, my help and my God. My soul is cast down within me; therefore I remember you from the land of Jordan and of Hermon, from Mount Mizar.” Psalm 42:5-6

The Psalmist is experiencing the black depths of midnight as we all do. Reading all of Psalm 42 helps you to discover the reason why. His “soul thirsts” for the living God because he is unable to worship. Worship helps move us out of our depression and into a place of grace.

Church worship lifts our souls to the Lord, who helps us find peace, love, joy and grace in our daily lives and our world. This is the same now as it was ages ago. Singing hymns that bring our faith to life and listening to and praying prayers of petition focus our spirits on what Christ does in our lives. Finally, hearing the word as it is preached, allows us to learn to practice our faith more fully and lead more Christ-like lives. These all move us from the black midnight into the bright morning light.

Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my savior and my God.
Psalm 42:11b

Prayer: *Thank you God for Trinity United Methodist Church, its leadership and its membership. Thank you for your sustaining grace upheld and sustained by our weekly worship. Amen*



Tuesday, April 1, 2025

Ann Melder

“He was despised and rejected by others; a man of suffering[a] and acquainted with infirmity, and as one from whom others hide their faces he was despised, and we held him of no account. Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases, yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed.”

Isaiah 53:3-5

The Bible verse I was given to reflect upon is Isaiah 53:3-5. It discusses how the Messiah will suffer for our sins. Jesus offered himself up as a sacrifice for the sins of the world...my sins! Isaiah continues to explain how many people thought the servant (Messiah) was suffering for committing His own sins when, indeed, He was suffering for the sins of the world.

As I thought and prayed about these verses, my principal thought was that of gratitude. Thank you Jesus for paying for my sins...unworthy me! My next thoughts were how can I express my gratitude to Jesus for this great gift? Gratitude means that you are ready to show appreciation and return kindness. Well, since I really can't show kindness to Jesus, what can I do? I can show kindness to my fellow mankind. What better way to thank Jesus for His sacrifice than to love and appreciate His children?

Prayer: Thank you Jesus for your sacrifice on our behalf. Please help me to show Christian love and kindness each and every day to all of your children. Amen



Wednesday, April 2, 2025

Jennifer Gunter

“The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.”

Lamentations 3:22-23

Mercy. Compassion. Forgiveness. These are all unearned gifts that God freely gives to us because of God’s great love for us. When we are unlovable, God still loves. When we aren’t worthy of mercy, compassion, or forgiveness, God still freely gives.

We aim to be people that work to make earth look just a little bit more like heaven. In order to do that, we need to be intentional about loving the so called undeserving and unlovable people. We need to be purposeful about extending mercy, compassion, and forgiveness to those who don’t necessarily deserve those things, even when it is difficult.

Prayer: God, we thank you for your unfailing love and unending mercy for us. Please help us to be more like you and extend love and mercy even when - no, especially when - we believe it is undeserved. Amen.



Thursday, April 3, 2025

Sidney L. Matthew

“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” Matthew 11:28-30

As tax return deadlines approach soon, it is only fitting and timely that we turn to our personal biblical tax collector Matthew for guidance on how to be cheerful in discharging some of our least liked earthly obligations. Matthew knew well about growing weary from carrying heavy burdens. He endured plenty of public scorn from squeezing heavy Roman taxes out of the pockets of the poor. So when Jesus came into Matthew’s office one day, it only took three words from Jesus to prompt him to walk out the door for good: “Come, follow me.” Even then the Pharisees scorned the Association between Jesus and Matthew saying “Why does Jesus eat and drink with sinners and tax collectors?”

Just imagine the solace expressed by Matthew when he heard the powerful and cleverly disguised rebuke which Jesus employed in response to his critics:

“It is not the well, that a physician seeks to heal, but the sick.”

“I am not come to lead the righteous but sinners to repentance.”

How well Jesus spoke to the essence of the human condition. For most mortals there is a burden to handle the difficulties of day-to-day life which alone present plenty of uncertainty. And there is the remaining truth for which the solution is less than obvious: that would be the strange statistic of mortality which states “One Out Of One Dies.”

Maybe the prosperous Pharisees believed they could handle that burden all by themselves. But they would soon be compelled to realize another universal truth: “Earthly prosperity mostly turns people inward without an answer for eternity.”

Of course, on the other hand, Jesus is saying that he completely understands that the human condition is fraught with enough daily trials and tribulations to make even the stouthearted weary and frustrated. And, if you “Come to me”, I can promise you “eternal rest” which is something human beings long for but are completely unable to provide themselves.

Prayer: Thank you Jesus for covering my back in the hard times today and for allowing me to follow you joyfully in Eternity. Amen



Friday, April 4, 2025

Wayne Curry

“What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 8:31-39

As a pastor with over 50 years of ministry under my belt, these words of scripture hold a special place in my heart and have been a continual source of strength and hope throughout my life’s journey. They have always served as a powerful reminder of the incredible love and support of God, even in the face of challenges, doubts, and uncertainties.

The assurance that “If God is for us, who can be against us?” echoes through the decades of my ministry, reinforcing my faith and providing a solid foundation to stand upon in times of hardship and adversity. It serves as a rallying cry, igniting a sense of courage and determination to press on in proclaiming the message of hope and redemption to all who seek it.

The words “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” resonate deeply within me, serving as a constant reassurance that no matter the trials and tribulations I have faced over the years, I am held securely in the embrace of God’s boundless love. This love has sustained me through the highs and lows of ministry, guiding me with grace and compassion..

The declaration that “in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us” speaks to the resilient spirit that has carried me through the challenges of ministry. It reminds me that with God by my side, there is no obstacle too great, no difficulty too daunting to overcome. Through His strength, I have found victory in the face of adversity and peace in the midst of chaos.

And finally, the profound truth that “neither death nor life... will be able to separate us from the love of God” fills me with a deep sense of awe and gratitude. It is a reminder that God’s love is constant and eternal, transcending time and space, and sustaining me through every season of my ministry.

As I reflect on these verses in the twilight of my years of ministry, I am filled with gratitude for the unending faithfulness of God and the enduring power of His love. They have been a guiding light, a source of strength, and a wellspring of hope, shaping me into the pastor I am today and inspiring me to continue sharing the message of God’s love and grace for many years to come.

Prayer: *Loving and Eternal God, thank you for being with me through it all. Amen*



Saturday, April 5, 2025

Janice Foley

“Since, then, we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested[a] as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” Hebrews 4:14-16

“What a friend we have in Jesus ... What a privilege to carry, everything to God in prayer.” (Joseph Scriven, 1855)

As I was reading this passage, the old hymn, ‘What a Friend We Have in Jesus,’ came to mind. I like to think of myself as someone who is prayerful, but admit it is only in stops and starts. The scripture and song reminded me that prayer is a gift and opportunity that I can experience anytime.

Before the time of Jesus individual prayer was uncommon. Instead, it was the role of the high priest to act as a go-between for the people with God. The prayer preparation of the high priest required certain ritual preparations and an animal sacrifice and took place in a hidden part of the temple. Since Jesus, we don’t have to do that!

We don’t require another human to intercede and speak to God for us. We can pray directly to Jesus who is divine. Not only is Jesus divine, but he experienced what it is to be human. Jesus experienced the hardness of criticism, hostility, and injustice. Like us, he experienced a gamut of emotions and physical sensation sorrow, sadness, disappointment, frustration, anxiety, hunger, thirst, exhaustion and pain. Yes, like us he also experienced joy! What better friend could you have to listen to and understand your prayers than the divine being who walked among us, was tested and tempted, yet did not sin? No better friend than Jesus who sacrificed his human body and gave his blood for our sins.

This passage implores us to hang on to our faith and to go boldly in prayer. Knowing all we know about Jesus, we have every reason to treasure our faith. We can boldly carry everything to God in prayer. Our prayers require no set place or time and need not be formal and structured. We can pray without hesitation.

Take a few minutes to read the words of the poem/hymn ‘What a Friend We Have in Jesus’ and take everything to him in prayer.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, help us to not forget the amazing gift of prayer and to bring our needs and concerns to you without hesitation.



THE FIFTH WORD

“I am thirsty.”

John 19:30



Sunday, April 6, 2025
Bob Gibbs

“As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and behold the face of God?” Psalm 42:1-2

All living beings need water. We were created that way. In fact, the earth’s plants and animals are made up of a large percentage of water. Water, in a very real sense, is life. When a space probe looks for life on other planets or moons, water is one sign that indicates life, as we know it anyway. So, for the psalmist to use the image of a thirsty deer seeking water as a way of portraying how they are thirsting after God, we get it. The only way that deer is going to get the water it continually needs is to search for it, to keep going until life-giving water is found. It is a daily, life long need in that deer’s existence. That is precisely how we should understand our need for God.

The thirst of the writer of this psalm is palpable. The land of this poet was most likely desert. Water in the land of the Old Testament was scarce and highly prized in that agrarian economy. Water was essential for life. So, seeking after water was a full time job. And rain was welcomed as a gift from God. As a life long Floridian, I misinterpreted a Biblical passage until relatively recently. I grew up thinking rain was a bad thing, or at the very least inconvenient. We had plenty of water and the rain got in the way of my outdoor activities. It stopped baseball games and made us stay inside during recess at school. So, I thought the phrase, God “sends rain on the just and on the unjust,” meant that God sent bad stuff on the good and the bad people. It made sense. But I was not thinking like a desert person, or even a farmer, would think. Rain is one of God’s greatest gifts to creation. And in some parts of our world where there isn’t much rain in a year, it is difficult to grow food and to find enough clean water for drinking. For many people in our world today getting water means a daily journey to a community well, or stream. Seeking water is a constant in their lives.

We are fortunate to have access to clean, safe water close by, literally at our fingertips. But we can still identify with the psalmist and with the millions of people, as well as all the creatures of God’s world whose thirst for water is not easily quenched. That is how we should feel spiritually, how we need to continually thirst for God and God’s grace in our lives. Let us stay thirsty for God.

Prayer: *Gracious God, keep me thirsty for you, keep me seeking your life-giving water for my soul and my daily life. Amen.*



Monday, April 7, 2025

Rodney MacKinnon

“Hear, everyone who thirsts; come to the waters and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” Isaiah 55:1

This chapter is crucial for our time. It’s a metaphorical call to focus on spiritual nourishment. If you are thirsty, come and drink. Even if you have no money, come, buy, and eat. I believe Isaiah is referring to the spiritual hunger we feel in this age of distracting screens, declining social institutions, unfulfilling and abstract careers, and constant heralds of doom. The deep and timeless existential anxiety and longing for meaning and importance.

Why spend money on what is not bread? In our time, luxuries are cheap, while necessities are expensive. It’s easy to fill up on candy, to spend hours looking at screens, and to avoid meaningful interactions for the safe distance of text messages and likes. We need to feel something greater. To be connected to humanity and God. Isaiah calls us to come and eat, and drink of God, no matter our past or present.

Prayer: I pray that we can set aside the trivial and focus our lives on God and the nourishment of his love. Amen.



Tuesday, April 8, 2025

Karen Rowan

“Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.” John 4:13-14

When I was young, my grandparents lived in Savannah, Georgia, in a wooded area full of natural beauty. Behind their house was a pond teeming with frogs whose nighttime chorus was often so loud that it made talking while sitting on the back porch a challenge. This pond was fed by an artesian well, which means that it naturally filled with spring water from the aquifer; no pump required. The water would gush out into the pond at a strong and constant rate through a pipe my grandfather had installed. I learned that this happens because the water in the aquifer becomes confined between two impermeable layers. When these layers create a structural trap, the water in the lower part of the aquifer is stored under pressure. If the pressure is sufficiently high and a well is sunk, the water will rise to the surface without pumping.

Today’s verse speaks about springs of living water that we can tap into. If we want life rushing through us and overflowing out of us, we must be tapped into the aquifer of living water by the Holy Spirit. There is an abundance of life just waiting to spring into our lives and flow through us so that others can also benefit from God’s words and ways. His life-giving water is there below the surface, and He will never dry up. However, for the water to fill our souls and overflow into others’ lives through us, we must continually be tapped into His spring. This requires prayer and reading the words Jesus spoke while on earth.

As you prepare your heart to receive the good news of Easter, take time to tap into the Holy Spirit through prayer and spending time reading God’s words so that you can be overflowing with His springs of living water.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we are grateful that you want to share so many good things with your people. Create in us a yearning to read your words and to speak with you during this time of preparation so that we can have a deeper relationship with you and give to others out of your abundance given to us. Amen.



Wednesday, April 9, 2025
John Willis

“Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.” John 6:35

To me when it says “whoever“ it means anybody, anyone at all. Even if they don’t talk, look or believe like me. Sometimes we may not feel worthy. However, Jesus is saying, everyone should come to him, regardless of who they are.

Hunger and thirst

These two are basic needs that everyone has. We’re not talking about wants here. Actually, we often confused the two, don’t we. We have friends who were on a tour overseas when their ship sank! (Fortunately, the ship was still at the dock when it sank)

They escaped with only the clothes on their back. Three days later after traveling through three international airports in the same clothes, she arrived back at home. Afterwards, she said, “Afterwards, she said, “I may say I want a new dress, but not I need a new dress!”

How about you? What is it that you need today? Jesus said don’t carry that need by yourself. Come and believe and let me help you. Some of us know what we need and some of us don’t know. Guess what? God knows, he knows exactly what we need.

How do I find out what that need is and will for us? Well, it’s the old – stop, look and listen. Part of the Lenten journey is to take time to stop and look around for signs from God. If we don’t stop, life can become a blur. Take time to listen for God’s direction. Stop the noise And listen to him.

Prayer: *Oh Lord, Sometimes we are so busy talking and doing and seeing that we don’t take time to listen to you. Please help us be more conscious of listening and receiving from you. In Jesus name, amen*



Thursday, April 10, 2025
Tanya Hollady

“They will hunger no more and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat, for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.” Revelation 7:16-17

In 2001, I was given the opportunity to go on a mission trip to Bangladesh, the poorest country in the world. Bangladesh is an often-forgotten country filled with hunger, disease, perpetual unrest and persecution of Christians by the dominant Islamic population.

The small Christian community that I stayed with would meet secretly every night reading the Bible and praising God for all He has done for them. Despite their daily reality of profound economic and political oppression, sometimes brutal treatment and threats of death simply because of their faith, they were filled with gratitude to God for His provision and care. I was humbled to be with these believers who were genuinely sold-out followers of Christ, and on fire for the Lord in an environment that might be classified as Hell on Earth. Simple things we take for granted -- indoor plumbing, clean water and a roof over our heads -- they live without, yet they praise God for meeting their daily needs. They live in gratitude for the simplest things, and joyful expectation of the day when they will hunger and thirst no more, when there will be no more illness, no more persecution, no more pain. Their lives are defined by this hope. They know, without a shadow of doubt, that the day will come when they will see Christ face to face and He will greet them with open arms and a fabulous, abundant feast. He is their Bread of Life and Living Water. And because He is their Bread and Water, they live, even now, in that abundance. They exemplify the truth that “God is not the absence of suffering but the presence of God.”

I will be forever be grateful that God provided me this opportunity to visit this impoverished country to befriend people who are rich in faith, hope and love.

Prayer: *Gracious Father, you are our Shepherd, our great Comforter, our Refuge, our Bread of Life and Living Water, now and forevermore. We praise and thank you for your unfathomable love and goodness toward your children. Amen*



Friday, April 11, 2025

Pat Striplin

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.” Matthew 5:6

Hunger pangs—I have often felt them after hours of writing, reading, teaching a class, or whatever task I have been completely immersed in. I have been so totally engaged that until I felt physical pain, I didn’t realize I was hungry. Or I might have been so focused on finishing a task outside that I didn’t allow my thirst to register; I was laser focused on finishing the job. I don’t think this is what Jesus was referring to, though, in Matthew 5:6. He is speaking in everyday language; he is using the vernacular of his time and ours to communicate his message. His followers then and now can understand the language of eating and drinking—the pangs of hunger and the parched feeling of thirst.

These words “...those who hunger and thirst...” hold an especially poignant message for me. For some time now I have felt a deep hunger to know more—to go deeper in my quest to not only know more about Jesus but to know him more fully. I am sincerely grateful to acknowledge that my Trinity experiences are now playing a significant role in helping me continue seeking to satisfy that hunger.

These words of hunger and thirst are also a part of “The Sermon on the Mount,” in which Jesus is teaching us about how to live, life lessons intended to guide us toward righteous living. I have read this scripture many times and have also read much that has been written about The Sermon on the Mount, especially about Matthew 5:48 where we are instructed to “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” I sincerely want to live a righteous life, but I’m a human being and readily recognize and admit that I definitely fall far short of perfection. I have concluded, therefore, that I, that we all, can strive toward perfection, that we can work toward excellence, while understanding that actually reaching the goal of perfection is not humanly possible. The journey itself, though, the way we live each day—our love of God, the way we respect and care for one another, our service to “the least of these brothers and sisters”—is a righteous goal, I feel.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we all need your help, your guiding hand as we strive to live a righteous life. Amen



Saturday, April 12, 2025

Jamie Trulock

“The time is surely coming, says the Lord GOD, when I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread or a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD.” Amos 8:11

When I first read Amos 8:11, I began to feel a sense of abandonment and sadness. To imagine an existence where God would essentially be silent and absent from my life is unimaginable and difficult to reconcile. However, in contemplating this passage further, I actually began to feel reassurance and comfort in knowing that I am not experiencing a famine! God is always with me and I can feel His presence and seek His guidance at any moment of any day.

However, hearing the words of the Lord does not always come easily. The ability to discern God’s voice in a hectic, fast-paced world is sometimes hard. I have found that spending quiet time with God in prayer helps me to be a better listener. Not only can I listen during quiet times, but prayer also helps me stay tuned in when my day becomes louder and more chaotic!

Prayer: Dear Lord, thank you for being a faithful presence in my life; help me to take time to hear your voice and listen to your instructions. Amen.



THE SIXTH WORD

“It is finished.”

John 19:30



Sunday, April 13, 2025

Brett Ingram

“Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.” Genesis 2:1-3

The above passage describes God’s day of rest after finishing His work of creation. God rested on the seventh day to show that He was done; not that He was tired and needed time off. It marks the completion of God’s work. It also indicates the importance of the Sabbath day which is a day of rest. God created a design of work and rest for which He calls us to follow in six days of work and one day of rest, reflection and worship.

We all have busy schedules at times. Sometimes I feel that I need a Ten day week just to complete everything that I deem needs to be done. But God has other plans for us. He worked six days and rested on the seventh. Why do I think that I need to be any different? We all must learn from God’s example and follow his leadership and teachings. God made you and wants you to take care of his creation. So, I urge you to take a Sabbath day. Take a break. Take some time to stop and rest. Take some time to stop and smell the roses. After all, God made those too.

Prayer: Dear God, please help me and guide me through these busy times. Help me realize that a day of rest is as important for me as it was to you. Amen



Monday, April 14, 2025

Ruth Ann High

“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.” Isaiah 55:10-11

God speaks to us. But do we always hear what He says? How does God speak to us? I know I hear God when I participate in Bible studies. When several are gathered to study God’s word, the Holy Spirit has been strong. But I also know God speaks His word to me in many other ways. I have heard God’s word in a sermon, or in a hymn. I have heard God in a prayer. I have also heard God speak to me in nature. Who doesn’t enjoy finding God at the beach or in the mountains? Can God speak to us in a cloud? A flower? Or in a tree? God has also spoken to me through other people. I see God when I am driving and someone lets me cut in front of him to enter a busy street. I see God when someone holds a door open for me. I see God in a child’s smile, and in a mother’s hug.

The opportunity to see God is endless. We just have to be willing to look for Him. If we open our eyes and listen with our hearts, God will speak to us clearly and fill us with his Word. Our world is frustrating and its disappointments cloud our vision. But God is still speaking to us and sometimes God is speaking through us.

I am writing this on a rainy day. It seems dreary outside, but the rain will make our spring more beautiful. Listening to God speak to me and hearing His Word can also make my life more meaningful and hopefully pleasing to God.

Prayer: Dear God, help me see and hear you speak to me. Help me to grasp your love for me and how I can share your love with others. Help me to follow your will. Amen.



Tuesday, April 15, 2025

Sally Huggins

“ I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do.”

John 17:4

When I was in sixth grade, my maternal grandmother died of colon cancer. She'd undergone intensive treatment a couple of years earlier, but in 1981 it came back with a vengeance. She was in the hospital for a week or so before she died, right after Easter, and she was given strong pain medicine to keep her comfortable.

My mom was sitting with her one afternoon, and my grandmama was muttering about a family cat that had died years earlier. Knowing that the pain medicine was the likely cause of her talking about a family animal from years ago, my mom just talked to her quietly, agreeing with whatever she said. A few moments later, there was a knock at the door.

Before she could answer the door, my mom was greeted by some ladies who were visiting patients in the hospital. She could tell they were there to talk religion with my grandmama, and she tried to explain that it was not a good time for a visit. One of the ladies, before leaving, said, “tell me, sister, has your mother been saved?”

My mom was not able to answer the woman because my grandmother called out from her bed in a clear voice, “Yes I have!” The lady then looked past my mom, and asked, “sister, can you tell me when that was?” My grandmama said, “when Jesus Christ died on the cross for me!” The ladies turned and left, and within a few moments, my grandmother had returned to muttering about the cat. My mom closed the door, aware that she'd just witnessed something glorious.

As a sixth grader who'd not lost a grandparent to that point, my grandmother's death was devastating to me. I was the first grandchild on both sides of my family, and I spent many weeks during the summer and weekends during the school year with both sets of grandparents. They were all deep people of faith whose expressions of that faith were very different.

My paternal grandparents taught me much about the natural world created by God, but we didn't go to church much. There wasn't time, when we were fishing and hiking, and learning that gum balls from a sweet gum tree could serve as a toothbrush in a pinch. What a glorious world God created for us!

My maternal grandparents were faithful church members who were in Sunday School and church every weekend, and when we were in town, we attended the same United Methodist church that my great grandparents were members of.

Their friends, who were Sunday School teachers, and choir members, and pastors, helped form my understanding that no matter what happened to me, Jesus would always be walking by my side.

I wasn't aware of the story about my grandmother until I came across a paper my mother wrote when she shared this story with her Sunday School class. It's a powerful reminder that what my mom witnessed was a glorious action by Jesus that would bring comfort to people, even thousands of years later. She knew Jesus was in that room that day. If she'd chosen to *only* believe that my grandmother's actions were due to medication, she would have missed an opportunity to share what Jesus brought to her, and I would have missed an opportunity to share it with those reading this today.

As the scripture reads, Jesus knew his final actions on earth would bring glory to God, to provide assurance that everything will always be ok when we believe in Jesus. My mother carried the assurance that her Savior died for her on the cross, and that a glorious life was waiting her when she died in 1988. Hopefully I have many years left with my family, but I carry that assurance that my savior died for me, on that cross, and a glorious life awaits me one day. We should all carry the assurance that Jesus died for us, and share those experiences we have, however big or small, to bring glory to God.

Prayer: Lord, so often we don't recognize those moments when you are there. Sometimes we easily see the big moments and miss the little ones. Help us to recognize when you are there. Give us courage to share those moments with others so that we can bring glory to you as Jesus did in his final days on earth. Thank you for the gifts you've given us, both big and small, and help us live with the assurance that you walk with us always. Amen.



Wednesday, April 16, 2025
Hines Boyd

“He entered once for all into the holy place, not with the blood of goats and calves but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption.”

Hebrews 9:12

No doubt, the key word in this passage from Hebrews is “redemption.” The word has its roots in the Latin “redimere,” meaning “to buy back.” Instead of “eternal redemption,” another version of the Bible translates the Hebrew text more loosely as “-to set us free once and for all” –to cleanse our conscience, to unload our guilt. The scope of this promise is difficult for us humans to grasp—at least for me, it is.

I’m sure that I’m not the only one who’s been struggling lately with the darkness that seems to be rolling over our national conscience. I keep asking myself, “Am I complicit in the national behavior that seems so antithetical to the core teachings of Christ—love your neighbors no matter who they are or what they believe, help those in need, care for the poor and oppressed?” I get it that some people will take advantage of you when you practice these teachings in real life. I get it that it’s hard to practice them effectively if you’ve drained all of your resources. I get it that it’s difficult, tough work. But does that mean we shouldn’t even try to manage our way through the obstacles—that we just put our personal or corporate interests first and forget about the rest? That’s much simpler, isn’t it? But certainly, it’s not what Christ had in mind when he preached the Sermon on the Mount or issued the Great Commandment.

In contemplating this national Crisis of Conscience, it seems that the little we can do will not make much difference. We feel helpless.

But this passage in Hebrews offers comfort. We have been set free from our guilt. Our consciences have been cleansed. We have been REDEEMED through Christ’s sacrifice. This redemption offers us the strength to do our small part of God’s work in our earthly home.

Prayer: *Lord, help us to put our trust in you. Amen*



Thursday, April 17, 2025
Jim Mitchell

“See, I am coming soon; my reward is with me, to repay according to everyone’s work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.” Revelation 22:12- 13

Everybody loves a good story but what makes a good story is the beginning and the ending. We often judge stories and movies based on how good their endings are. We love a story that was so good that we want it to keep going and going and going. God’s Story is contained in the Bible, God’s Holy Word. God’s Story begins with the first book, Book Number 1, Genesis and it begins with “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth...”. God’s Story, God’s Holy Word, comes to an end with the last book in the Bible, Book Number 66, Revelation. Jesus says, **I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.**

From beginning to the end, it is God’s Story, how God wants to have a loving relationship with his people, with you and me. There is a thread running through the whole Bible, God’s Story, showing what God did and will do to have this loving relationship with his people. It all culminates with God giving Jesus, the Son of God, to be our way to be with God in God’s Story that keeps going and going and going.

Meanwhile, we are living and writing our story in relation to God’s Story. My story has a special affection for Revelation 22. My grandfather, Rev. James Thomas Mitchell, preached his first sermon at the historic Homeland Methodist Church in Homeland, Florida, in 1894, based on the 22nd Chapter of Revelation. A side story, his uncle (and my great-great uncle) Henry Laurens Mitchell was Governor of Florida at the time, 1893-1896. My father, Rev. Thomas Glenn Mitchell, also preached his first sermon at the Homeland Church. It was in my first year of seminary at the Iliff School of Theology in Denver, Colorado, that I preached my first sermon in a little church, 4 hours east of Denver, near the Kansas border, where I could hear the cattle from my motel room in the country town of Wray, Colorado. We all have stories. Take time to share your story with someone.

I love the lyrics from a song “Unwritten” by Natasha Bedingfield which became a popular theme song for the TV Show “The Hills”: Today is where your book begins - The rest is still unwritten! During this Season of Lent, as we approach the old, old story of Jesus and his love through Holy Week and the Resurrection on Easter Sunday, may we write our story to draw us closer to Jesus and into a loving relationship with God.

Prayer: *O God, Thank you for your Story, from the beginning to the end, to show your love for me. Help me to write my story so I can be with you forever through Jesus, who is the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end! Amen.*



GOOD FRIDAY

“Father, into your hands I commend my spirit”

John 23:46-49



SILENT SATURDAY
Saturday, April 19, 2025

AND THE EARTH WAS SILENT...



CONCLUSION
Rev. Dr. Matthew M. Williams, Senior Pastor
Easter Sunday 2025

But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for He has risen, as He said.

(Matthew 28:5-6)

Easter morning has arrived, and with it, the overwhelming joy and hope of Christ’s resurrection. After these forty days of reflection, prayer, and personal transformation, we now stand in the light of the empty tomb, reminded that death does not have the final word but love does.

Reading through this devotional has been a profoundly moving experience for me. Each entry was more than just words on a page; they were personal testimonies of faith, struggle, and renewal. As I walked through your reflections - your joys, your griefs, your moments of doubt and revelation, I was deeply impacted. Your willingness to share your hearts, to be vulnerable, and to testify to the power of Christ’s words in your lives has been a gift beyond measure.

Thank you to each and every person who contributed. Your insights, your honesty, and your faithfulness have made this devotional so much more than a collection of reflections, it has been a shared journey, a sacred conversation among us as a church family. I have been changed by your words, challenged by your faith, and encouraged in my own walk with Christ.

Now, as we step into the joy of Easter, may we carry forward the lessons of this season. May we continue to listen for Christ’s voice in our lives, to support one another in faith, and to live as people of resurrection hope. The journey does not end here; it continues in every act of love, every moment of grace, and every step we take toward a deeper relationship with our risen Lord.

Risen Lord, thank You for the ways You have spoken to us through this devotional, through each other, and through the power of Your Word. May we go forward transformed, ready to live as witnesses to Your love and redemption. Amen.

He is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

