

Daily Lent Devotions from the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of the Southwest

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February 14

Monday, February 12, 2018

9:22 AM

People have observed religious patterns for millennia. Certain hours of the day, days of the week, weeks and seasons in the year matter to people. Different religions mark time differently, but all religions mark time for sacred purposes. Jesus's earthly parents were no different. Luke emphasized the patterns observed by Mary, Joseph and Jesus in telling the story of Jesus getting separated from his parents and then being found by them in the Temple (Luke 2:41-52). "Now every year," he wrote (Luke 2:41). And "they went up as usual for the festival" (Luke 2:42). Luke also described how Mary and Joseph named Jesus according to tradition and how they dedicated him at the temple, "according to the law of Moses" (Luke 2:22). They were people of patterns, but what happens when patterns get disrupted?

The company of travelers had departed, but Jesus was not among them. An often overlooked quality of this story is that Mary and Joseph did not "lose" Jesus. Jesus stayed behind. He made an intentional choice. In the middle of familiar patterns, Jesus disrupted the lives of the people who loved him most. Mary and Joseph rushed back to Jerusalem and found Jesus in the Temple. The story highlights three qualities about disrupted religious patterns.

Disruption brings anxiety. Mary scolded Jesus saying, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in **great anxiety**" (Luke 2:48). In truth, it wasn't the disruption of the pattern that caused the anxiety; it was the potential misplacement of the child. He was 12 and if they had bar mitzvahs back then, he would have had one. He probably thought he was adult enough to make his own decisions--sounds like some other 12 year-olds we have known. Yet, Mary and Joseph were afraid. Their child was missing. We can only imagine their knotted stomachs, tense shoulders, accusing stares at one another, and the agonizing guilt. Disruption does that. It brings anxiety, accusation, and guilt.

Disruption brings amazement. The flip side of anxiety is amazement. When Mary and Joseph found Jesus, he was teaching in the temple. Teachers were listening to them and asking him questions. It was remarkable. So much so that "His mother treasured all these things in her heart" (Luke 2:51). Sometimes it is difficult to see beyond the blinding anxiety disruption brings, but if when we do, we often see that God is doing something remarkable and new in the space between the patterns that defined us and the new thing that God is breathing into life.

Disruption brings anticipation. Luke tells us that Mary and Joseph searched for Jesus for three days. Quite possibly he meant a literal three days. Luke was a careful historian and he narrated how the days passed. It possible that Luke meant it symbolically. For three days Jesus was hidden from those to whom he had been entrusted. At the end of the Gospel, people who followed Jesus would be subjected to another three-day wait. The wait from trial and arrest to resurrection. Sometimes the Bible speaks of three days as just three days. Sometimes, the Bible points to something more. If this second possibility is meant here then Luke was asking people to anticipate. Maybe he is asking us to anticipate the new thing God brings after the patterns have been disrupted.

With the start of Lent, we--like Mary and Joseph--take a familiar pilgrimage. We journey through the ancient liturgical season. Lent developed as a season for Baptismal preparation, but became a fixture for Christians at varying stages of their own spiritual walk. It is possible that we will simply go through the motions again this year. It is possible that God

may disrupt our patterns with anxiety, amazement, and anticipation. It is possible that it will be some combination of the two. Whether in the patterns or in the disruption may God's will and way live within us and may we find ourselves within God's presence.

Lord who gave the days of the week and made one Holy, who gave the seasons of the year and set apart some for special purpose, teach us to number our days aright that we may gain hearts of wisdom. And should you choose to disrupt our patterns with a fresh anointing of your Spirit, grant us willingness to be found precisely in the places where you want us to be. Amen.

February 15

Friday, January 26, 2018

2:59 PM

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February 16

Friday, January 26, 2018

2:59 PM

The opening words of the Gospel of John are often heard during the Christmas season. Yet, they belong to Lent just as much as any text in the Gospels. As we examine the events of Jesus's life, the pathway to the cross, and the glory of his Resurrection, it is important to remember the affirmation about where he came from. John begins with the beginning. "In the beginning . . ." was the Word. The word is a reference to the word of God. It is a phrase that has become synonymous with the Bible, but should not be limited to the Bible. When the Bible itself uses the phrase, "the word of God" it means God's will, God's intention, God's revealing God's self to humanity. The word of God is God God's self. "The Word was with God and the Word was God . . . All things came into being through the Word.

When John wrote this about the word—the *logos*—the Logic or mind of God—he could have been drawing on imagery we find in the book of Proverbs about Wisdom. In the eighth chapter of Proverbs, Wisdom is personified and she speaks to humanity—her children. Wisdom declares, "The Lord possessed me at the beginning of his work, before his deeds of old; I was appointed from eternity, from the beginning, before the world began. When there were no oceans, I was given birth, when there were no springs abounding with water; before the mountains were settled in place, before the hills I was given birth, before he made the earth or its fields or any of the dust of the world. I was there when he set the heavens in place when he marked out the horizon on face of the deep, when he established the clouds above and fixed securely the fountains of the deep, when he gave the sea its boundary so the waters would not overstep his command and when he marked out the foundations of the earth. Then I was the craftsman at his side. I was filled with delight day after day, rejoicing always in his presence, rejoicing in his whole world and delighting in humanity" (Proverbs 8:22-31). This is "fullness of God" that is pleased to dwell in Christ Jesus.

It is this fullness that comes in the Flesh. John said, "'And the word of God became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory the glory as of God's own son.'" Again, John here reached back into the First Testament and gathered together the sacred narrative and applied it to Jesus's work in the world. When the people of Israel were delivered from slavery in Egypt and they journeyed for forty years in the Wilderness, the Glory of God was embodied in the Ark of the Covenant. Whenever they moved they would take the Tabernacle with them. The Tabernacle was the tent dwelling that housed the Ark. It was also called the Tent of Meeting. As the Israelites journeyed across the wilderness, they did so as a confederation of 12 Tribes. When they needed a place to consolidate power and organize themselves, they would have representatives come to the Tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting. It was the place where Moses would address the people. The glory of God's presence dwelt with them. It was also the place where Moses spoke with God. Exodus 33:11 explains, "Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend. Then he would return to the camp; but his young assistant, Joshua son of Nun, would not leave the tent."

See then all that John has woven together here in his pinpointing of the beginning of Jesus's work—creation, the Wisdom, Will and Word of God, the Exodus, the giving of the law. Jesus did not come as a baby so that we could nurture him. Jesus came as the Word of God so that we might listen to him. Jesus came as the Christ that we might believe in him. Jesus came as Lord that we might follow him.

February 17

Friday, January 26, 2018
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Churches like ours struggle with what to do when Satan makes an appearance in a biblical story. Since 1986, when Dana Carvey introduced the Church Lady on Saturday Night Live, most Disciples can't have more than a two minute conversation about evil without someone breaking out their falsetto voice and saying, "Who could it be? Could it be mmm Satan?" Beyond deflecting our discomfort with humor, many of us don't know what to say about Satan. Few of us would put much stock in the artistic depictions of Satan found in things like the Sistine Chapel. We might all agree that most of our problems are of our own making. Even so, if we resist the character too thoroughly, we miss the truth embedded in the story of Jesus being "tempted" by Satan.

The story of Jesus confronting Satan in the wilderness serves as the basis of Lent. It was forty days (Matthew 4:2). It was a time of fasting and prayer. It was a time to confront the temptations that continually confound humanity. Satan challenged Jesus's identity. "If you are the Son of God." Actually, he said it twice. In the first two temptations he said, "If you are the Son of God." In terms of the story Matthew told, there was no question that Jesus was the Son of God. Jesus had just been baptized. And as Jesus emerged from the water, the voice of God spoke from heaven, "This is my Son, the Beloved, in whom I am well pleased." Satan's called into question an identity the Gospel had already made certain.

Jesus completely embodied God's image. That's what it means to say that Jesus is the Son of God. It's not to suggest that God and Jesus had the sort of relationship kiddos have with their parents. Jesus didn't roll his eyes and God's Dad jokes, or ask for money, or breathe heavy as God explained to him exactly why it's important to put things back where they belong. That's not what it means to say that Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus as God's son is fully human. He fully embodies the image of God that is the birthright of every person.

With Psalm 139 we pray, "I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made." Genesis 1:26-27 tells us that we are made in God's image and in God's likeness. You were made in God's image—as we all were made in God's image. If humans are all made in the image of God and Jesus fully reveals the image of God then Jesus is the most fully human one. We are renewed to that image as we live in Christ. The temptation comes to lose sight of God's image revealed in Jesus and in ourselves. The attempt by Satan to call Jesus's identity into question was an attempt to call into question our own identity. His work was and is to reveal to us that we were made in God's image and by abiding in him we are being remade.

Satan not only tried to diminish Jesus's identity, he tried to dissolve God's sovereignty. He tried to convince Jesus that God's power could be manipulated for personal affirmation. Like the temptation to diminish the identity we have in God's grace, this temptation that Satan presented to Jesus is present with us as well. It shows up when we believe that we should be able to pray in a certain way, live in a certain way, and essentially manipulate God into doing things our way. Jesus modeled for us a steadfast commitment to wanting what God want, accepting God's definition of what his life should be, and seeking first God's purposes. Satan tempted Jesus to diminish his understanding of himself and to diminish his understanding of God. Satan was not successful with Jesus.

In the case of us, the temptations succeed at least in part. If it didn't succeed, we wouldn't need Lent. We trade our God-given identity as bearers of God's image in the world for something less. The good news of God's grace is that God leaves the invitation open to repent and return. We can begin each morning reminding ourselves of who we are. You are made in God's image; remade through Jesus Christ. We can begin each morning reminding ourselves of who God is. God is God. We can begin each morning keeping both things in mind: You are God's child. You are God's Church. You are beloved. The perpetual reminders of who God is and who you are within God's grace will do more to keep you out of temptations than any threatening picture of Satan, comedy sketch or even a lenten devotional. Thanks be to God.

Lord, you have made us in your image and you remake us in Christ Jesus. Protect us from the temptation to forget who we are and who You are. Amen.

February 18

Friday, January 26, 2018

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“I Surrender All”

The first Sunday after Epiphany this liturgical year, we were met with several weeks of Biblical stories of calling from both Old and New Testaments. They are relentless calls. Demanding. Not optional. Each calling is unique and each of the persons called is oddly compliant and cooperative, usually responding quickly, answering yes, leaving family, fishing nets, a job at the temple (well, except for that problematic call that had to be repeated to Jonah). Samuel, Simon and Andrew, James and John, Jonah...**and in each calling, of course, there is an understanding that there just might be a call for the reader as well.** The lectionary moves from calling people to calling out “demons and unclean spirits.” An interesting evolution.

To be in any kind of ministry, vocational or avocational, we usually describe our role as having been “called by God.” Sometimes it is dramatic, sometimes it is peculiar, sometimes it is private, sometimes it is public. Sometimes it is sudden, sometimes it unfolds over time. Much of a calling is hard to describe. Sometimes it’s an inkling, other times it’s a mountaintop experience and sometimes it’s about as close to a miracle as you can get. There’s just no telling where or how God is going to be able to get our attention.

Our call is more important than anything. Let’s use Mary’s call as our example: it’s more important than reputation, social standing, societal norms. It’s bigger than the angel Gabriel, larger, way larger than Mary’s world construct. Mary had to allow her view of the cosmos to explode. Her world view was blown up. She hadn’t seen angels, she knew she could be a social outcast all the days of her life, it isn’t indicated that Mary or any of the other calls that were issued would be met with a “no” or an “I don’t think so” or an “I have to give 60 days’ notice” (Jonah took a detour, he avoided it for a while, but he never said no).

Mary had to embrace a new view of herself in a patriarchy, she could not be limited by her own understanding, had to go beyond her fear, beyond her understanding of biology, beyond everything. She let go, embraced an expanded view of thought and spirit and surrendered. Mary is afraid, yet she surrenders. She doesn’t understand how it’s unfolding, yet she surrenders. She is perplexed, vulnerable, caught way off guard, yet she surrenders.

Mary’s call, delivered by an angel, seems quick, surprising, reassuring, clear. Acceptance comes easily: “Let it be with me according to your word...” Some calls are so unmistakable, so Saul-on-the-road-to-Damascus piercing, that a light switch is flipped and transformation happens instantaneously. For most of us, though, there is a common denominator: ***the call never ends.*** It takes root in us and grows, unfolding over a lifetime of service, obedience, suffering, dedication and faithfulness. Amazingly, Jesus appears and does more than we could ever hope for or imagine. Like Mary, we can be humble, gracious, obedient, dependent. ***God’s call is everything.***

Prayer: “All to thee, my blessed savior, I surrender all.”

Christine K. Chenoweth, DMin, is a Pastoral Counselor and Trinity-Brazos Area Minister of Connection. Her Sundays are spent preaching in an historic building in a rural north Texas community, worshiping as close to the Oklahoma state line as she can get and still be in Texas! She likes to fish and kayak on the Guadalupe River and is a college football fanatic.

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Friday, January 26, 2018

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Matthew 3: 1-6

In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea proclaiming, “Repent, for the Isaiah spoke when he said, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths

straight.’ ” Now John wore clothing of camel’s hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then the people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

Along the Margins

A popular method of manual notetaking requires a two inch left hand margin. Key words, important phrases, major themes or topics are placed in the margin apart from the main body of the notes. When it is time to review for a test or a more extensive paper, the answer, or important information is always in the margins. Just enough information to point to full content of the subject.

How do you find a prophet in the land, a voice trumpeting from the wilderness, an outlander, a loneliness dweller, a flame thrower of truth-telling? Always in the margins. John the Baptist was no exception to the norm of thorny, historical truth-telling prophets, who always found themselves in the margins between God’s righteousness and human disobedience. A “thin place” which brought humanity in close proximity to God even though it was uncomfortable.

John the Baptist blasts onto the scene, adorned with the traditional understated woolen and leather wardrobe and an unapologetically modest organic diet. This was prophetic witness at its finest and it literally manifested itself along the margins: the River Jordan. His voice was heard above the religious clamor and political upheaval of the time. It was heard above the tension of meaningless mediocrity living.

A voice with clarity and authority announcing a new era, a new day, and new possibilities. A voice calling forth hope to the wilderness living of people who felt rejected, oppressed and forgotten. The thin place of existence was filled with the voice that was a call to action, a call to repentance, a call surrender to new life. After all, a prophet of God cannot lie, cannot compromise and does not have a contract that allows for surrender of resignation. John the Baptist was such a character.

John the Baptist was not part of any power structure but he certainly understood the contamination that it had brought to humanity. Along the margins, he cried out and people responded to a truth that had not been heard for centuries. God’s kingdom was near, accessible, and available to all.

How well do we hear that prophetic voice? The one that still calls with an authority beyond the experts of the day. The voice that bears truth to will and way of God, do we still hear it? Is the kingdom that John announced still at hand? As we journey through this Lenten season, may we hear the call clearly, fervently, and make our way to the river of grace which comes through Jesus Christ.

Prayer: God of wilderness and rivers, help us find the straight path of love, peace, mercy, justice and reconciliation that you bring. Give us ears to hear, and repented hearts us our prayer. Amen.

Rev. Marilyn S. Fiddmont is Vice President of the Southwest Zone, and Northeastern Region of the Christian Church Foundation.

February 20

Friday, January 26, 2018
2:59 PM

Mark 1, 9-11. Calling Jesus

As I read the scripture of Jesus being baptized by John in the River Jordan, I looked back to when I was baptized. It was Easter Sunday of 1948 in a small Disciples Church in Mt. Carmel, Ill. I was excited and had

gone through the Pastor's Class that prepared me for the event. I can't remember if it made a significant change in my life or not at the time.

In reading the scripture I know baptism was a life changing experience for Jesus. It was not in a comfortable church but in a river where others were being baptized. After John baptized Jesus and he came up from the water, things really happened. I have tried to visualize the heavens tearing apart and the Spirit descending on him. When God spoke to him and called him "my Son the Beloved" and said he was pleased, it was a true calling to ministry. Jesus was an example for all of us, the abuse and hardship he endured never slowed him down. We can use that as an example to not give up and abandon our faith journey but to continue the work Jesus started for us.

Referring back to my baptism not making a significant change in my life, it could have been caused by the fact that our family moved frequently and even though we continued to find a church wherever we moved to, we were never at any one place long enough to make a connection with the programs in that church. We continued to move all through my high school years and after my graduation and when my parents were about to move again, I said not this time for me. I attended church once in a while but there was something I was missing and wondered for a long time if I would find out what it was. I always helped people and would have positions of leadership in the churches I attended but still lacked that passion that Jesus had to be the light of God to guide us from the darkness. The light of my baptism did not really come on until I married my wife and we experienced some of the same issues with our faith. When she entered Brite Divinity School, the changes started to happen in both our lives and the commitments we made years earlier started to make a difference.

My baptism has changed my life, it just took some faithful followers of Jesus to open my eyes to what I was missing. Now I have a wife as a mentor and minister to keep the light shining in my life and as partners we can make a difference.

Loving God thank you for your son and the sacrifices he made for us that we can have eternal life. Help us to continue the work that he started and give us the strength to push forward no matter what the road blocks we encounter along the way. Bless those that brought me back to a meaningful baptism. AMEN.

Ron Rosignol, member of Monte Christian Church of Albuquerque New Mexico and husband of the Pastor, Reverend Dawn Rosignol

February 22

Friday, January 26, 2018
2:59 PM

A servant must have credentials, and our Lord has the very best. His coming was

prophesied by Isaiah (40:3) and Malachi (3:1) and announced by John the Baptist. The Father and the

Holy Spirit commended Him, and Satan could not defeat Him. He is a Servant you can trust.

But what can He do? What is His work? He can guide your life and make it a success. He can over come

Satan and sickness and use you to bring the message of salvation to a lost and needy world. You can be a

servant of the Servant and share in His wonderful work. Note here that Jesus, when John the Baptist is

arrested, picks up John's message to be certain it is heard.

The proclamation of the Kingdom's nearness is followed by the invitation to the fishermen.

Jesus gives a new task to the fishermen. The new task is doing what Jesus does, traveling with Jesus.

We must understand that this new way of life with Jesus will result in new ways of acting.

What interrelation is here that you may explore? What is the nature of this invitation Jesus extending to the fishermen? Is it simply to be his traveling companions?

What do you think it meant to these persons to? Leave their nets and their father to follow Jesus?

Elder Betty Brown, University Christian Church of Houston, Texas

February 23

Friday, January 26, 2018

2:59 PM

I find it absolutely amazing the witness that Jesus left us for prayer. Our scripture for this the 10th day of Lent is a beautiful moment in the life of Jesus where he spends all night on a mountain praying...a night of prayer, of communing with God on the Trans-Jordan Mountains... a night that turns into dawn and a new day with new joys and challenges. After what I imagine was a night of conversation and debate...who the right people would be called not just to be Disciples but also Apostles, Jesus comes down from the mountain and claims his motley crew.

As Director of Programming at Disciples Crossing part of my responsibility is to help call Summer Camp directors, hire Summer Interns, and aid in Summer Camp Staff selection. And it always amazes me to watch the wonders of God occur in those processes. Before a list of directors is created, applications go out, and staff recruitment begins...there is prayer. As a list comes into being, intern applications are available, and staff begins to say yes or no...there is prayer. As directors are finalized, interns chosen, and staffs begin to be equipped...there is prayer. While reading the passage from Luke, I was reminded how important those moments of prayer are not only for our camping ministry, but also for my spirit.

This passage in Luke where God calls his apostles is a reminder to all of us that there is power in prayer, that prayer matters, and that even when there is hustle and bustle that has nothing to do with Christmas shopping, we have to find that **quintessential** mountain and spend a night in prayer. God shows up for me as I read the call of the Apostle. It is a reminder that sometimes we are the ones praying on that mountain and sometimes we are the one being called. As Lent continues, I pray that you take your turn on the mountain praying; but also that you are observantly anticipating a call.

God of Mountains and Valleys, of Dusk and Dawn...we anticipate the sunrise of Easter and ask that as we journey toward the empty tomb, you remind us to take time to stop, pray, listen, and respond. Thank you for being a good God whose love endures forever. Amen and Amen.

-Rev. Emily Renee Williams. Disciples Crossing. Professional Bull Riding (PBR) is my favorite sport!

February 24

Friday, January 26, 2018
2:59 PM

Mark 1:21-31 – Calling Everyone

As I read this passage, I found myself remembering an event at church when I was a child. Sitting in the worship service one Sunday morning, I heard a commotion in the back of the sanctuary. All of a sudden, a man started yelling, wailing, and making all kinds of noises. I could hear what all was going on but I was afraid to turn and look. I was afraid because I didn't understand. I saw many adults quickly jump up and rush to help him. I heard them talking to him and trying to calm him down. As it turned out, he was suffering an epileptic seizure and so was rushed to the hospital. The people in church treated him with genuine compassionate care, rushing to his aid, and offering encouraging words. Those encouraging words were healing words for him. And for the congregation. Despite the times, occurring about 45 years ago when epilepsy was not widely understood, he was never made to feel unwelcomed or unclean. Those healing words enabled him to return to be a part of the congregation after his seizure, without feeling ashamed or embarrassed, but rather feeling loved and included despite his condition.

I think about the man with the unclean spirit in our passage and the healing words that Jesus spoke. They were direct, calling out the unclean spirit, as if to say, "Anything that marginalizes and keeps this child of God from being whole will no longer have power over him." Jesus wouldn't allow this man to be held back any longer from being all that God created him to be. Like the people in the worship service of my childhood described above, Jesus immediately responded with words and attention that enabled the man to feel a valued part of the community. Both mattered – to Jesus and to the congregation.

Unclean spirits come in a lot of forms. Healing comes in a variety of ways. At a time when divisive words seem to reign over healing words, perhaps being intentional about seeing the value of our fellow human beings who may be different – believe differently, live different lifestyles, vote differently, have different worldviews – will call out the unclean spirits that have fractured relationships and created hostility in our society. What unclean spirits is God calling you to confront and call out? What healing do you seek? What healing is God inviting you to offer to others?

Gracious God,

You are the great healer and we are grateful for your healing presence in our lives. Give us courage to call out the unclean spirits in our lives and in the world around us. Show us the way of your love that we can offer healing words and actions to those we have wronged, to those with whom we disagree, to those we don't understand. Help us to mend the brokenness in our world, with the love and compassion of Jesus Christ, being mindful of calling everyone because everyone belongs. Amen.

Rev. Dawn Rosignol, Sr. Minister of Monte Vista Christian Church in Albuquerque, NM, since June 2017. Passionate about ministry to "the least of these". Grateful to be sharing life with Ron and our 3 dog-children Ranger, Gracie, & Lexie.

February 25

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"Teaching" - February 20, Matthew 5:21-26 with a title of "Jesus Teaches Reconciliation" -
Matthew 5:21-26 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

Tax season is upon us and I am getting ready for my meeting with my CPA. As always, I'm diligently making sure that all my assets (real estate, bank accounts, cash, vehicles) are accounted for, as well as all my liabilities (loans, mortgages, insurance). When all is said and done, my balance sheet will show my Equity (Assets – Liabilities). I love high equity, so I work hard in reducing my liabilities and increasing my assets. Liabilities, when not properly managed, could take away all the assets bringing bankruptcy and financial death.

When applying this concept to my spiritual life I need to be extremely vigilant to those things that creates liabilities in my relationship with God and others. In this reading, Jesus is telling us that being angry at others is a liability that brings bankruptcy to our relationship with them and with God. Jesus is telling us that the sixth commandment, "You shall not kill", goes further than plain murder.

Anger kills our ability to love each other and to enter in a loving and caring attitude with those that we are angry with. It also kills our ability to come into the presence of the Lord. Do not bring your offering forward until you have reconciled with your brother and/or sister. Promote peace and friendship with your brethren instead of anger. Go and reconcile and then come to the Altar. God is seeking for us to bring a burnt offering of reconciliation to His altar. Jesus is our Altar, and to him we should bring a reconciliation offering of love, mercy and righteousness.

Are you liable? Are you in Anger with your brother/sister? Are you willing to let that liability destroy your relationship with God and others? Hurry, "go and be reconciled."

Yes, it is tax season, but it is also lent season, a time for reflection and preparation. It is a time for reconciliation with others, so we can come clean into His presence and finally present the offering left at the Altar.

Prayer:

Dear Lord, teach us how to show mercy and grace to those who wrong us. Give us the strength to seek forgiveness from those we have hurt with our anger and bad temper. Forgive us for the pain and suffering we have caused to others and guide us as we seek to reconciled with them, so we can be in communion with you always. In Jesus name we Pray. Amen.

Nelson Torres--Central Christian Church, San Antonio TX, I was raised Catholic and very religious as I attended Catholic schooling from first grade to college (twice). I always wanted to become a Priest but could not reconcile celibacy so I became a Minister and father of three. God is great!

March 1

Friday, January 26, 2018
2:59 PM

Have you ever noticed when someone is looking at you with visible contempt? Jesus had been cheerfully ministering to the marginalized of his society – tax collectors who were collaborating with the Roman occupation, and people whose lifestyles were judged to be 'sinful' by the hyper-religious of his day. He noticed he was being given 'the look', so he began to tell a series of stories using the form of parables. To make a point, he did not use high scholarly language nor the language of religious professionals. He used word pictures, simple words that anyone could understand.

Jesus often used simple stories (parables) that would have a double meaning – one obvious to all, but with a spiritual application that those who CHOSE to pursue could discover later in conversation with Jesus. Jesus WANTED to communicate with the common people. By Jesus using parables, he set himself apart from the scribes and Pharisees who would torture their listeners with long tedious interpretations to show off their knowledge. Communication was not their goal. Admiration for their brilliance was. Jesus knew that simplicity is best when trying to communicate, and Jesus wanted to communicate with ALL, not just a select few. Who doesn't enjoy a good story?

One of the simplest of stories was the parable of the lost coin, one of a set of three that Jesus told to emphasize that God is a God who considers EVERY human worthy of pursuit, with immense innate value. A woman had ten coins, probably dangling from her headdress, and lost one. She stopped everything upon discovering it was missing, and searched for the coin urgently. There may have been panic in her heart. It was likely part of her dowry, and the only money she would be able to take with her should her marriage fail.

Think about the simplest way to define the meaning of 'lost'. To begin with, it means being *out of place*. That coin belonged on the fringes of the woman's headdress! Likewise, people, ALL PEOPLE belong in fellowship with God, and when they are not, they are *out of place*. But to be lost also means *being out of service*. A lost coin has no value to the owner, and a lost soul cannot experience the enriching fulfillment God has for that person in Jesus Christ. But to turn this around, to be "found" means that you are back in place (reconciled to God), back in service (life has a purpose), and out of danger. No wonder the woman rejoiced and invited her friends to rejoice with her!

It is easy for us today to read these parables and take their message for granted, but the people who first heard them must have been shocked. *Jesus was saying that God actually pursues people, especially those society regards as of little value. God never writes anyone off.*

Today, is there a person for whom you feel contempt? Someone you would rather not be around? Try something new. Look at the person with fresh eyes. See that person the way God sees that person: as someone of enough value that God searches for, pursues and woos that person deliberately and intensely. If you could see that person as THAT valuable in the sight of God, would it change how you feel? Would it change how you act? Could you reach out to that person as God has reached out to you?

Rev. Elizabeth Grasham is the Solo Minister at Heights Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Houston, Texas. She and her husband do cosplay and are geeks through and through.

March 2

Friday, January 26, 2018

2:59 PM

March 2

John 3:1-17 "Jesus teaches Salvation"

The passage in John 3 is an intimate encounter between Jesus and Nicodemus. Nicodemus professes his belief in Jesus as a divine teacher, since he performs miraculous signs. But Jesus' response is to challenge Nicodemus' (and our) understanding of God's saving act. We must be "born again"/"born anew"/"born from above" to see God's kingdom. As Nicodemus ponders this, Jesus adds a soliloquy on the incarnation. The Human One who came down will be lifted up so that all who trust in God will have life eternal.

The culmination of the speech is that most-famous John 3:16. I count it a shame that 400 years the King James Version began the translation of that verse "For God **so** loved the world..." Given the verse's popularity, even modern translations have hesitated to update the language to more precisely align with the intent of the verse in today's language.

The word "so" here is the adverb form of the Greek word for "this" and is most likely better translated "in this way" (which was a common use of "so" in the English of four centuries ago, though not today). The verse primarily communicates the broader context of the speech—God loved the world **in this way**, that God gave his son for the sake of the world. Jesus' incarnation was God's act of love.

It is important, especially in the season of Lent, that we hold on to the specificity of God's saving act of love. The point is not that God loved us "so much", but rather we are all invited to trust in the specificity of the incarnation that God loved us "in this way", by entering into this world in sacrificial manner, in order to widen our access to accepting God's love. Lent is the time when we cast our gaze towards the culminating act in the earthly life of God's messiah. And Jesus' own explanation of his purpose is to define the specifics of his life, death, and resurrection as the manifestation of God's love. Our faith is not ethereal, and it is certainly not nondescript. Our faith is founded on the specificity of God's love through Jesus Christ.

Call it cliché, or call it simplistic, but Jesus really is the answer. "What would Jesus do" really is an important question.

How should we treat our neighbor? the homeless? the refugee?

How would Jesus lead us to treat them?

How should we respond to gun violence? systemic racism? classism?

How does Jesus inform our response?

May our journey towards Holy Week renew the specifics of our faith, and maintain Christ clearly as the center. God's love finds its way to us and to our families and communities in many ways. But God's saving love comes to us specifically in Jesus Christ.

Prayer: "O God, for your love which we know in Christ, we offer our complete trust and our humble acceptance of your grace. Deliver us into the family of faith as we open ourselves up to the specificity of your love in this world and your claim on our lives.

Amen."

Rev. Dr. Joe Weaks

Co-minister at Connection Christian Church in Odessa, Tx.

Joe had been to church camp at every Disciple camp facility in the Southwest Region by the age of 19, and has now served Texas churches in Austin, San Antonio, El Paso, Baytown, Fort Worth, Spearman, Dallas and Odessa.

March 3

Friday, January 26, 2018

3:00 PM

Matthew 7:24-27

Have you ever experienced a time when a life event just about flattened you, like a huge rock crushing your heart and soul? A child run over by a drunk driver? A baby that you had prayed so desperately for being stillborn? Your spouse telling you they are leaving you for someone else? An addiction in you or a loved one that has cost you everything? If so, then you may identify with the strong images of Matthew 7:24-27 that portray the difference between those who have faith and trust in God, and those who do not. Those whose houses, whose lives, center on the priceless gift of Grace that comes from a relationship with Jesus, versus those whose lives focus on things of this world.

My first read of these verses reminded me of a local contractor's television ad that has a woman in the kitchen hearing her spouse say he is going to get something from another room, and next hearing that side of the house crash. That is how life events happen, the ones that do almost crush us. Out of nowhere, our dreams and our futures can seem about to disappear.

When I am seeking to understand what Jesus was explaining in the Scriptures, it often helps me to take a look at the verses that precede the passage with which I am wrestling. In Matthew Chapters 5-7, we are reading the words of Jesus commonly known as “The Sermon on the Mount.” Jesus had been traveling throughout Galilee, teaching and healing, and was being followed by large crowds of people. It was a perfect opportunity for Jesus to provide some real truths to not only the crowds, but to Jesus’s disciples as well: some in the form of parables and others via object lessons.

Walk with me a moment back to this scene. As Jesus gazed upon this mass of people, a group that I imagine included many children, I hear him being very stern, yet very compassionate. His ability to see into people’s minds and hearts may have fueled Jesus’s choice of truths. I would like to think everyone was looking at him with rapt attention and devotion, but anyone who has ever delivered a sermon or any sort of public speech can testify that not everyone enjoys having their shortcomings pointed out.

Knowing that some were not truly hearing what he had to say, I believe that in Matthew 7:24-27, Jesus loved these people so much that he was making one last effort to make sure everyone present knew there would be consequences in their lives if they did not take his teachings seriously. I have an image of Jesus raising his voice, gesturing with his arms and hands, and pleading with these people for whom he would soon be willing to die.

Take time during this advent season to read not only these four verses, but Chapters 5-7 in Matthew. If you read something that makes you weep, something that reminds you of a heart crushing moment in life or long buried resentment towards God or others, find a pen and paper and write down those feelings. Find someone to share those feelings with: a Pastor, an Elder, a close friend that you trust. These three sets of ears are often for me times of God wearing skin. I wish the same for my readers.

Prayer

Holy One and precious keeper of my soul: Thank you that you are only a prayer away when life suddenly takes a turn and leaves me feeling alone, and angry, and frightened, and so far away from your loving arms and tender mercies. May I always remember that your Grace is sufficient, and that one moment, one day at a time, your strength will carry me until my own is renewed. When the foundations of my life are crumbling, the winds are beating against me, and the floods of emotional and physical pain are washing over me, let me hear your words in my ears: “I so loved you, my beloved, even before you were born, that I gave my only son so that by your belief in Jesus, you will not perish, but will have eternal life.” Amen.

Linda Barnette, Richland Hills Christian Church

March 4

Friday, January 26, 2018
3:00 PM

March 5

Friday, January 26, 2018
3:00 PM

March 6

Friday, January 26, 2018

3:00 PM

“The Welcome”

We see in this text people were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them, but when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said “Let the little children come to me” do not stop them; for it is too such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.” and he received them up in his arms, laid his hands on them and blessed them. Mark 10:13-16

In this scripture, we see Jesus really getting upset with his disciples who want to prevent him from holding and blessing the children who were brought to him. Maybe they are trying to keep the crowds away from him or maybe they think that children are not as important as adults in those days, but the disciples are wrong. Jesus wants to be with them because they belong to the kingdom of God. When I think of children, I think of these words: sweet, pure, honest, trusting, humble, playful, and loving. Woe to adulthood. We spend our entire lives growing out of childhood and away from possessing the very qualities Jesus said we must have to “receive the Kingdom of God.”

As time goes on, we are exposed to sin and we do sin (sometimes). We are exposed to lies and untruths and learn to mistrust. We read about gangs, criminals, and terrorists of different races, colors, and religion and become hateful and discriminatory. We see the power of money and become greedy. We are compelled to work long hours to get ahead or promoted, and don’t leave enough time for play or prayer. Unless we are very careful, we will soon become everything that a child is not. We know that Jesus is forgiving, but we must become strong in prayer and faith so we too, will be able to trust, love, and forgive everyone, every day, the way Bible teaches us.

Let us pray: Dear Jesus, please compel us to spend time with children, playing, loving, and praying with them, let us watch them and learn from them, let us not only show kindness to the children and youth that we encounter each day, but also our neighbors, our co-workers, and those that live in us communities. Let us pray that we do not lose all our child-like qualities as we grow older. In Jesus’ name. **Amen.**

Humbly Submitted,
Rev Myron Goins Sr (Texas Christian Missionary Fellowship)

March 7

Friday, January 26, 2018
3:00 PM

Oh distractions! We probably all know this text: Jesus goes to Mary and Martha’s. Martha gets upset because Mary is sitting at Jesus’ feet taking it all in instead of helping Martha be the host. Jesus tells Martha that Mary is in the right and she should not be so distracted from learning from him.

As a wife, daughter, minister, friend and new mom, distractions are so very real for me right now. Between the feedings, changing diapers and clothes, doing laundry, playing with her, having the most entertaining conversations with her, or sometimes just staring at her there is always something to distract me. Then there is cooking and cleaning. And the church’s social media and website. And Wednesday night programming. And all the Sunday stuff. Oh! I have not checked in on this friend in a while, I should do that. And Mom called me last night when I was getting Little to bed, I need to call her back. And. And. And.

I cannot tell you the number of times I go to do one thing and find 5 other things to do, and never actually get to the original thing and by then I forget what that original thing was. Lists are my best friends right now!

When I ask myself who I am in the story, at this life stage, I am Martha all the way. I probably identify so strongly with Martha that I don't even see or hear the Marys around me. While I recognize at times that I crave time to sit at Jesus' feet and soak it all in, on my way there I get distracted.

Maybe you find yourself much like me, distracted by the "stuff" of life. Let's set aside our stuff and just sit with Jesus, even for a few minutes and see what he has to say.

Maybe you are like Mary and are taking the time to spend with Jesus. Soak it all in! (maybe gently remind us Marthas that all that stuff will be there after we take a time out with Jesus).

Maybe this Lenten season we can find a way to be somewhere in between, both giving space for the distractions and to spend time at Jesus' feet.

Holy One, as we journey through Lent, we ask that you find ways to break through to us in our business. May we remember to find ways and times to sit at your feet allowing the distractions to fall away so that we can soak up all that you have for us. Amen

Heather Santi-Brown

I am one of Associate Ministers at First Christian Church in Arlington. I am a daughter, friend, minister, wife and, most fun of all, mom to our beautiful 4-month-old daughter!

March 8

Friday, January 26, 2018
3:00 PM

Lent Devotional
Radical Welcome
John 7:53-8:11

This passage reminds me of two qualities about my Dad. One, he had high expectations and two, he loved us no matter what. And I love him all the more for those two characteristics.

Some dismiss this scripture of the accepted adulterous woman because it was likely added later to an original manuscript of John. And yet it was chosen to be in the canon, the chosen contents of the Bible, because it was seen as important. Others see it as too forgiving, to the point where Jesus doesn't seem to see a difference between right and wrong. Yet others see it as too mysterious: What did Jesus write in that sandy ground?

In spite of the skeptical scholars and religious legalists, Jesus didn't give into their ploy to trap him in legalities. He simply points out her lapse in good judgement, naming a sin a sin. But he also made it clear to the woman adulteress (and one has to wonder where her male counterpart disappeared to, since he is in the same boat), that she is accepted as a child of God and to move on. In her gratitude for that radical welcome, we can only hope that she did.

Like a fine parent, Jesus isn't concerned about condemning or condoning poor choices, but in loving us and setting us free, to love God, ourselves and each other enough to choose faithfully for ourselves, now and in

the future. Thank God. Jesus doesn't even make us pay for our sins, although poor behavior often results in natural consequences. Instead he ultimately takes on the weight of our poor choices in life, with his own life. And we've all had second chances ever since.

Holy and Loving God,

We thank you that you call us to a high standard of living faithfully. We also thank you that when we fall down that you love us still. May we be as expectant and as loving ourselves, we pray.

In the name of our mentor and our friend, Jesus,

Amen

Rev. D. Kim Fields-Haley, West Mesa Christian Church, Kim is a gardener, struggling with desert realities, but celebrating always every nourishing and abundant herb or vegetable (like prolific Armenian cucumbers last year), and also a Mom, working through challenges humbly, but celebrating every growth and joy.

March 9

Friday, January 26, 2018

3:00 PM

Mark 10: 46-52

When reflecting on this scripture I noted that the title given to it is "Barriers to Welcome". Which really made me think. Do we really think of barriers as something to welcome. I think we try our best to avoid barriers at all cost. There are times when we are able to do this we go down a different road, we make other arrangements, we work around the barriers to the best of our abilities. What happens when there are no choices and we have to face our barriers head on, we just have to live with them. Or do we?

Bartimaeus was blind; he could not see. He sat beside the road begging, possibly for his survival. On one particular day he heard that Jesus of Nazareth was nearby. Scripture says upon hearing this he began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David have mercy on me!". He was told to "be quiet!". This only made him shout louder. When Jesus heard him, He stopped what He was doing and told those around him to "tell him to come to me". When told to come he threw away his coat and went to Jesus. Jesus asked him what he wanted and he replied by saying "I want to see!" Jesus told him, "go your faith has healed you." Instantly Bartimaeus could see, and he followed Jesus.

Bartimaeus was blind he could have chosen to live with this barrier but instead he faced it - he challenged it - he trusted in Jesus and his ability to heal him. He did not say "if you can, will you heal me, I would like to see". He said "Have mercy on me - I want to see" He had the faith that this could be done and so it was.

This past weekend I spent time with a group of Disciple women. One of these women shared a story with us which reminds me of Bartimaeus' story. She told us she has two sons, who are both married. Her youngest son was blessed early on in his marriage with a child whereas the oldest son and his wife, who were married several years before the youngest, had not been able to conceive. They had tried everything that was presented to them and all but given up hope. When the family gathered Christmas the youngest son announced he and his wife are expecting another sweet baby. The mother of the boys watched her oldest son's wife's face drop, she said "you could feel her sadness by just looking at her". That was when the mother of the boys decided that they need two babies in 2018. She said that the first words out of her mouth in the morning became "We need two babies God - two babies" and the last words out of her mouth each day became "Thank you Jesus for the two babies that are coming this year" She did this every day for about 3 weeks, she was persistent and she had faith. After about 24 days she got a call from her oldest son, who wept as he told her that his wife was expecting.

She could have accepted the fact that her oldest son would not have a child, and that the problem her daughter-in-law had was just a way of life. She could have believed whatever problem caused this condition was an impenetrable barrier. But she didn't. Instead she said "God have mercy on us, we need two babies!" and then she gave Him thanks.

During this time of lent we should be especially mindful of the promises that were made to us and at what cost. We need to give our barriers to God, and have faith that He will deal with them, then be thankful for His continuous care.

Oh Faithful, Loving God, Thank you for hearing our prayers, knowing our hearts, and healing our hurts. We often accept what is in front of us, just assuming that is what is to be. Thank you for Bartimaeus and his faith story for it reminds us that you are always listening and you have the power to break the barriers and when you do so it is a reminder of your faithfulness for which we should welcome!
In Christ Name I pray, Amen

Tasha York, Round Rock Christian Church

March 10

Friday, January 26, 2018
3:00 PM

Matthew 7:7-11. March 10, 2018. "Welcoming"

In these verses, Jesus is encouraging us to pray. He is inviting us to bring our wants, desires, wishes and hopes to God. He is inviting us to ask for help. For some, that comes naturally and easily. For others who were never encouraged to ask for help as growing up, it is hard. We would no sooner ask God for help than like most men would never stop along the way to ask for directions at a gas station. Many of us feel we can do it ourselves.

I am like many church people I know who don't hesitate to ask for prayers about health concerns. We see God as the source of our healing and it helps to know that we are being prayed for when we're sick. But think about that for a minute. What about all the other aspects of our lives that matter? What about everything else?

God is saying the very same thing to us now. I'm here for you, and I'm here with you. Ask me. Seek me. Knock, and I'll answer. You might not get what you want but you will get what you need. Maybe it will not be when we want something, but hopefully just in time. Why don't you give me a try? Ask, seek, knock. Trust me. I'm here is what God is telling us.

God desires to give good things to those who ask Him, seek Him and knock on His door. Our God will not give us "bad things" that will harm us. How do we know what to ask for, seek after and which door to knock on? Jesus instructs us to seek God's kingdom and righteousness. These are "good things" such as love, joy, peace, work, and wisdom. We are to knock on doors that will open, doors He sets before us. When we ask God and seek God and knock on God's doors, we will not get hurtful replies. God will only do what is best for us. If we get "no" to our request, or if we don't get what we are seeking, thank the Lord. If the door we are knocking on doesn't open, praise the Lord. Ask, look, knock. These actions sound so harmless and so easy. But behind these words is the intent of Jesus: "Be persistent! Keep asking! Continue looking! Don't quit knocking!" This is not a cookbook prescription, but a target attitude we should have in our prayers and our lives. We must be persistent and faithful.

Today's Prayer: Loving and Gracious God, we trust that you know us. We trust that you hear us. Yet far too often we keep our worries and concerns and hopes to ourselves. We want to do things on our own. Inspire us to cast all of our troubles on you. Guide us to seek your direction, and your will in all things. Thank you for the many prayers you have answered. Thank you for answering my prayers to be more like Jesus. I confess I am

still far from His perfection, but when I look at the distance you have brought me in the past, I can view the future knowing that you will lead me to become more like Him. In Jesus' name, I thank you and ask for your continued grace. Amen.

Nathan Higginbotham
Cypress Creek Christian Church, Spring

March 11

Friday, January 26, 2018
3:00 PM

Have you ever noticed when someone is looking at you with visible contempt? Jesus had been cheerfully ministering to the marginalized of his society – tax collectors who were collaborating with the Roman occupation, and people whose lifestyles were judged to be ‘sinful’ by the hyper-religious of his day. He noticed he was being given ‘the look’, so he began to tell a series of stories using the form of parables. To make a point, he did not use high scholarly language nor the language of religious professionals. He used word pictures, simple words that anyone could understand.

Jesus often used simple stories (parables) that would have a double meaning – one obvious to all, but with a spiritual application that those who CHOSE to pursue could discover later in conversation with Jesus. Jesus WANTED to communicate with the common people. By Jesus using parables, he set himself apart from the scribes and Pharisees who would torture their listeners with long tedious interpretations to show off their knowledge. Communication was not their goal. Admiration for their brilliance was. Jesus knew that simplicity is best when trying to communicate, and Jesus wanted to communicate with ALL, not just a select few. Who doesn’t enjoy a good story?

One of the simplest of stories was the parable of the lost coin, one of a set of three that Jesus told to emphasize that God is a God who considers EVERY human worthy of pursuit, with immense innate value. A woman had ten coins, probably dangling from her headdress, and lost one. She stopped everything upon discovering it was missing, and searched for the coin urgently. There may have been panic in her heart. It was likely part of her dowry, and the only money she would be able to take with her should her marriage fail.

Think about the simplest way to define the meaning of ‘lost’. To begin with, it means being *out of place*. That coin belonged on the fringes of the woman’s headdress! Likewise, people, ALL PEOPLE belong in fellowship with God, and when they are not, they are *out of place*. But to be lost also means *being out of service*. A lost coin has no value to the owner, and a lost soul cannot experience the enriching fulfillment God has for that person in Jesus Christ. But to turn this around, to be “found” means that you are back in place (reconciled to God), back in service (life has a purpose), and out of danger. No wonder the woman rejoiced and invited her friends to rejoice with her!

It is easy for us today to read these parables and take their message for granted, but the people who first heard them must have been shocked. *Jesus was saying that God actually pursues people, especially those society regards as of little value. God never writes anyone off.*

Today, is there a person for whom you feel contempt? Someone you would rather not be around? Try something new. Look at the person with fresh eyes. See that person the way God sees that person: as someone of enough value that God searches for, pursues and woos that person deliberately and intensely. If you could see that person as THAT valuable in the sight of God, would it change how you feel? Would it change how you act? Could you reach out to that person as God has reached out to you?

March 14

Friday, January 26, 2018

3:00 PM

Luke 12:35-38

We must be alert—be very alert! This is the central theme of Luke 12:35-38. Yet, for many Christians today the meaning of “alert” is vastly different from the meaning Jesus had when he spoke this parable.

The imagery Jesus uses in the parable is one of the wedding celebration. It was often the case in 1st Century Palestine that a groom would leave his home and travel a great distance to marry his bride. Following the wedding celebration and rituals, the newlywed couple would journey from her father’s house to his father’s home where the groom would have prepared a place for their family to begin. Of course, without modern communication, there was no way for the servants back home to know exactly when the groom would return with the newest member of the household so they had to be ready at any time. It was an investment they made joyously.

It is against this backdrop that Jesus reminds Christians of the need to be watchful and alert. The consequences for failing to keep alert are quite severe. In the context of the returning groom, returning home to find the household staff unprepared would result in harsh punishment. Certainly, the punishment is not an outcome anyone would desire, and one that is to be avoided, but it is noteworthy that punishment is not the primary focus.

Throughout much of church history and for many in our world today, the focus is disproportionately on punishment. It is part of a fear-based motivation for getting things done. Its message is simple. “Be afraid—be very afraid!” Coupled with this dangerous approach is the message that the world is dangerous and Christians are to be afraid of the evil in the world as well as afraid of God’s wrath if we don’t tow the line. Yet such thinking is not of Christ.

Rather than see the return of the groom as an occasion to be feared, the parable treats it as a joyous opportunity for blessing and celebration. The servants who remain alert and watchful for the groom’s return are then served by the groom in a grand feast. They dine with him at his table, celebrate with him in his joy, and share with him in the blessing of his new family. Forget punishment and fear. It is about joyously investing in future blessing.

Making that joyous investment in blessing is what watchfulness and staying alert is all about. We are called to be “dressed for action” and to have our “lamps lit” as we anticipate the fullest expression of Christ in our midst and all the blessings it brings. However, there is a problem. It sounds good, but then a new deadline looms at work, another church committee meeting rolls around on the calendar, an unexpected phone call shifts our whole attention, and the news of the day diverts our focus. We then react to all the stuff, and allow our attention to be focused on the many relevant things that genuinely seem more pressing. Prayer can wait because I must get this e-mail out. Serving my neighbor is something I can do another day because I really need to stay late at work to get this project done. In short, we become complacent and let life happen around us without any intentional focus on God and our faith.

In many ways, Lent is about saying no to the culture of fear and doing so with a renewed focus on joyful watchfulness and remaining alert. It is through this alertness and watchfulness that we can see ministry unfold before our eyes and find the blessings God has for us right now!

+ + + +

The Rev. David Wilson Rogers is the pastor of First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Carlsbad, New Mexico where he has served for the past 16 years. He is both a native of New Mexico and Veteran of the United States Coast Guard.

March 15

Friday, January 26, 2018

3:00 PM

Scripture: Luke 10:25-37

Today we encounter the parable of the good Samaritan--a story so well-known that even one who has never read the Bible, never been in church still has some knowledge of the events. It's a story that finds reference in our language, our writings, perhaps even our social DNA.

How many sermons have you heard based on this scripture? Sometimes the focus may be from the perspective of the Samaritan, or the inn keeper, or the priest and Levite, or even the wounded Jew. Like a brilliant gemstone, each reading and contemplation shows a new and different facet of the parable. So, if this scripture is "old hat" to the read, I invite all to give some thought to each of the players.

The scripture tells us this man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and; indeed, it was a downward trek of about 17 miles, losing about 1700 feet in elevation. The man was beaten and injured nearly to death by unknown assailants who not only took his money, but his clothes! And two religious folks seeing him, skirt around him so as not to get involved or even acknowledge him. Then along comes a Samaritan, who would have been taught to hate and despise a Jewish man. When the Samaritan came upon him, he gave him first aid, put him on his donkey and took him to an inn. There the Samaritan paid for his care and lodging for about two months and agreed to pay more if needed. The trusting innkeeper takes the word of the Samaritan and gives aid to the beaten man.

Jesus chose this story to answer the question about inheriting eternal life. The question came from an expert in the Law. Responding to Jesus' question, the expert said the Law required one to love God and one's neighbor as one's self. The expert then, pushing the point, asked for a definition of neighbor.

As you reflect on this parable, consider your neighbor. Is it the one living next door? The one down the road? One in another country? One next to you in class? One in the next cubicle at work? The homeless person on the street? Where does your understanding take you?

Will you be my neighbor?

Prayer: Compassionate God, thank you for giving me insight to know my neighbor, to give an attentive ear, to offer aid, to act with tenderness and mercy toward all your children. Amen.

Sydney Wirsdorfer, South Hills Christian Church, Fort Worth

My husband and I of 54 years cherish our young adult grandchildren, Connor in Fort Collins, CO, and Kaylyn in Denver, CO; and we are avid supporters and graduates of TCU!

March 16

Friday, January 26, 2018
3:00 PM

Proud or Humble? **Luke 18:9-14**

A few years ago, I was attending a conference in Chicago and had the privilege of attending one of the worship services at Willow Creek Community Church just outside of Chicago. Bill Hybels told a story of how he had taken up racquetball and had begun to think he was pretty good at it. He saw a notice about an upcoming tournament that he could enter. You could enter to play in the A, B, or C categories. Bill thought he had to be better than those in the C category and just had to decide between A and B. Bill struck up a conversation with another racquetball player and asked him if he was playing in the tournament. The man said he planned to and would be entering in the C category. They agreed to play racquetball and Bill thought he would be able to easily defeat this guy since he was only a C category player, but it turned out that the other player beat Bill badly. This was lesson for Bill in humility and seeing yourself as you really are.

In Luke 18:9-14, Jesus tells the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector who both went to the Temple to pray. The Pharisee thought he was the righteous one. After all, he followed all the rules and even went beyond what was required by fasting twice a week and giving a tenth of all that he gets. However, the Pharisee also thanked God that he is not like other men – robbers, evil doers, adulterers – and even the Tax Collector. On the other hand, the Tax Collector stood at a distance, did not look up, beat his breast and said “God, have mercy on me, a sinner”. Jesus ends the parable by saying the Tax Collector went home justified instead of the Pharisee. This must have been a shocking thing for the Pharisees to hear. The problem for the Pharisee was not that there was anything wrong with fasting twice a week or giving a tenth of everything you have. The problem was that he was measuring himself against the wrong yard stick. He was measuring himself against other men instead of measuring himself against God.

Lent is a time of self-examination. If we are truthful, are we more like the proud Pharisee or more like the humble Tax Collector who realized how much he needed God’s mercy? When we realize how much we need God’s grace and mercy then we are really at a place where God can mold us and use us.

Prayer: Father, we come humbly before you to show us where we are like the Pharisee and help us to change those things so that we see ourselves as people needing mercy like the Tax Collector. Mold us and make us into people that you call us to be. In Jesus Name. Amen.

Danny Housewright

First Christian Church, Plano, Texas

I will be spending part of Lent walking where Jesus walked when I take a tour of Israel from February 21st thru March 6th, 2018.

March 18

Friday, January 26, 2018

3:00 PM

Luke 18:1–8

What’s your attention span like?

Cultural critics love to remind us how technology and social media are ruining our ability to pay attention and to stay focused. Some have said that humans now have shorter attention spans than *goldfish*.

But what about you—what’s your attention span like?

I like to think that mine is growing—I’ve been practicing mindfulness regularly for some months. It might be working, but when I read about the persistent widow in Luke 18:1–8, I am not so sure.

This little parable has always confused me, to be honest. I appreciate the reminder to be persistent in prayer, but surely Jesus had a better image for God than a heartless judge who was fed up by an annoying widow that wouldn’t leave him alone. His heart experienced no transformation; he was still insensitive and indolent; the widow’s persistence merely wore him out. (I mean, we could have at least had a Grinch-like moment where his heart grows three times and everything ends with sweet resolve.)

Perhaps Jesus is saying that if this *unjust* man will grant one justice for their persistence, God will even quicker grant justice those who cry out persistently. Still, though, I find so many of the other parables more satisfying, even when convicting, at their conclusions.

This one still gets me, though.

“I tell you,” Jesus says, “God will quickly grant justice.” *Quickly?*

The widow in his parable had to feel like every day was grinding the last of her patience away. Those who cry out day and night in our world today—the hungry, the hurting, the broken—feel like there is nothing *quick* about the way in which God is answering their prayer.

Yet, this is the mystery of God revealed to us through Christ: God will quickly grant justice.

Most parables are subtle and open-ended in their meaning; this was told directly, Luke tells us, to remind listeners of their “need to pray continuously and not be discouraged.”

The good news is that God is *not* like the unjust judge. While the unjust heard the persistent cries of the widow, he never listened to her. When we cry out to God, our steadfast requests are not only heard; God listens.

The strange ending to this parable—“When the Son of Man comes, will he find faithfulness on earth?”—is a reminder that things are not yet over. In some sense, God’s justice *has* come quickly in God’s presence with us through all things. In another sense, God is still asking—will Christ be received with faithfulness?

We may feel that our attention spans are too short to be just like the widow in Luke 18, but we practice—not perfect—faith.

About two-thirds of the Lenten season have now passed. Did you give something up for Lent, or did you adopt a 40-day spiritual practice? Perhaps you are feeling a bit weary, with a growing sense of the nearing Maundy Thursday. Perhaps you are feeling a bit impatient for the good news that will blossom out of grief on Easter Sunday.

What’s your attention span like? Is it long enough to practice a bit of the widow’s persistence? Is it long enough to sense that, somehow, God is present in our cries, if not in an answer?

Tyler Heston, Assistant Minister for Youth, University Christian Church, Fort Worth, Texas

March 20

Friday, January 26, 2018

3:00 PM

John 10: 7-10

In John’s gospel, we find one of the most enduring images of Jesus, the image of the “good shepherd”. As Jesus engages the Pharisees following the expulsion of one that Jesus healed from the synagogue in Chapter 9, he expresses that he is one like a shepherd, who enters the sheepfold through the gate. In the text we engage, Jesus becomes the gate for the sheep, and ultimately promises that while those who came before were thieves and bandits, seeking to steal, kill and destroy, Jesus has come to bring abundant life.

As we journey toward the cross in this season of Lent, I think the promise of abundant life is refreshing. This is a season of fasting and repentance. We begin remembering God created us from dust and to the dust we will return at Ash Wednesday and we can get lost in the sorrow of our own failures and lack of following Christ. Yet, Jesus promises life abundant. Jesus promises hope and renewal, grace and fullness. When we enter through the gate that is Jesus and see him as the revelation of God in the world, we find an abundant, new life.

But we also cannot overlook what Jesus says about the thieves and bandits. There are all sorts of things that try to steal us away from the abundant life Jesus promises. In this season of Lent, as we remember our own sinfulness and failures, we might find ourselves stolen away by our own thoughts of unworthiness. We might believe that we aren't welcome into the fold, because we can never be good enough to be welcomed by the shepherd. The life abundant isn't for us but for someone – everyone – else. But Jesus opens wide the gate, welcoming us in, calling us by name and embracing us with love. The thieves can drag us out of this life we find in Christ.

As we come to the end of our Lenten journey, let us turn our eyes toward the gate, enter into the abundant life of God in Christ, and rest in the grace of our Shepherd.

Rev. Matt Every
Minister
First Christian Church
Ruidoso, NM

March 21

Friday, January 26, 2018
3:00 PM

Calling Followers
John 4: 35-42

Jesus teaches his disciples about the urgency of their task. Typically, when a seed is planted it takes many months before the harvest is ready for reaping. In fact, they apparently had a saying at that time, "Four months and then comes the harvest." But this is not the case right now. "Lift up your eyes and see that the fields are white for harvest." This is not simply a theoretical metaphor. Verse 30 revealed that based on the woman's proclamation to the city, the people were leaving the town and coming to Jesus. Imagine this multitude of people leaving the town and coming toward Jesus and the disciples. Jesus is telling the disciples: Look and see the fields are white for harvest. Here they come. The time is now. The harvest is now. This is the food of Jesus to do God's will which specifically is to teach these Samaritans, so they can have eternal life. Verses 36-38 describes what is transpiring. The disciples have done none of the sowing but will be doing the reaping as the crowd comes to Jesus. Jesus and the woman have done the sowing. Their work has led to the reaping.

The disciples of Jesus are to have a sense of urgency about doing the work of the Lord, particularly sowing and reaping with the word of God. Can you sense the excitement in the words of Jesus? I believe Jesus is trying to teach his disciples something very important. This teaching began with the disciples wanting to know why Jesus is talking to this woman. It is clearly something they would not have done. She was low on the social ladder and would have been ignored by most Jewish rabbis. Jesus food is saving souls; Therefore, the disciples of Jesus must also have the same urgency and intensity in saving souls. What is the reason for Jesus coming? "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him." The Father gave the Son to save people. Saving people only happens by talking to people. The good news of salvation cannot be transmitted any other way. We have been led to believe a misnomer that if we live good moral lives then people will see our lives and become Christians. But people will only glorify God by our good works and holy lives if we tell them that this is the reason we are living our lives the way that we do, if we are quiet and do good, people will not know that you are a disciple of Jesus and this is the reason for your lifestyle. The disciples are not going to save this woman from her sins by ignoring her. It is our work that we plant the seed of God's word.

The turnabout is very stark. The disciples don't understand why Jesus is talking to the woman and the woman is talking to the whole town that she thinks she has found the Christ. She goes into the city proclaiming that there is a man at the

well who was able to know her life story. Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony. The people are believing because of the woman's testimony. She has been the catalyst for this throng of people coming to Jesus. I want us to consider what she did. Did she know everything about the Law of Moses? Did she know very much to tell people about Jesus? She is not a Bible scholar. She simply tells the people to come and see this man and anybody can do that. All of us can tell people about how Jesus has changed their life and ask them to come and experience the same. We can tell people about the new birth that is available. We must never underestimate what we are able to do because it is the power of God and his word that saves. We are simply inviting people to come and see.

This calling of people to come and see will be a natural extension of our lives when our satisfaction and sustenance is in doing the will of the Father. When our joy in life is doing God's will, then we will have an urgency to share the good news which will lead us to tell people to come. We must lift our eyes and focus on what must be our highest priority. We must penetrate through that physical, materialistic thinking so that people can see they need a Savior. We must use our conversations to move people to not think about the comfort and conveniences of the physical but think about eternal, spiritual things. We need to ask people questions about what they think happens after death. Ask people if they believe there is a God. Ask people if there is a purpose to this life. Ask people about all kinds of things with an eternal impact to cause people to think beyond the now and break free of the spiritual blindness.

The secret to satisfaction is to do the will of the Father. Jesus told the woman that the water he offers will cause us to never thirst again. Jesus taught his disciples that he has food that they do not know about because he is sustained by doing the Father's will. Now it is time for the living water to continue to flow through us from Jesus to the rest of the world. Experiencing grace and recognizing God's will to save the world compels us to tell others to come and see the changed life that can be found in Jesus. You are the light of the world, shining in the darkness, trying to open the eyes of the blind. Do not turn off your light. Do not hide your light.

Humbly Submitted,

Rev. Myron Goins Sr (Texas Christian Missionary Fellowship)

March 22

Friday, January 26, 2018

3:00 PM

"I am the Resurrection and Life" Devotion

John 11:1-6,17-27,43

A true story, grieving sisters in Oviedo, Spain, were all dressed up and ready to go to their beloved brother's funeral, but they got a call to say, "Cancel the flowers." The sisters of Gonzalo Montoya Jiménez did. The day before, Gonzalo was found dead in his prison cell. Examined by doctors, and marked with drawings for an autopsy, he was sent to the morgue. But before the coroner pressed the scalpel to Jiménez's chest, he began to snore. Imagine the questions that swept through their little Spanish town—Is it real? Can the dead rise?

This is an essential question of Lent, that forty-day period of **reflection**—a *looking in*, a self-examination of your old condition of sin, and a period of **projection**—a *looking forward* to your renewal, to the expectation of the new possibilities in Christ's resurrection.

Is the resurrection real? That was the question the sisters of Lazarus struggled with when Jesus proclaimed, "I am the Resurrection and the Life" in John 11:1-6,17-27,43. In that "I Am and the Resurrection and the life" proclamation, Christ is calling followers to believe the resurrection as a **personal** reality, a **present** reality and a **powerful** reality.

First, believe that the resurrection is a personal reality (26). Jesus asked Martha if *she* believed in the resurrection. The question had to do with her personal relationship with Christ, if she believed in the fullness of Christ and his mission. You

need more than an intellectual assent the truth of the dead rising. You need a personal faith in the complete Christ sent to save the world. Her answer was complete, “You are the Son of God (27).”

Second, believe that the resurrection is a present reality (25). By Christ adding “and the life” in verse 25, Christ was saying to her that resurrection is not just some distant last day event, but it is part of a higher, unbroken spiritual reality and eternal destiny. We see in Jesus’ prayer in 42, him thanking God for what has “*already*, but not yet” been done—the raising of Lazarus. Resurrection, spiritually, is a *now* event.

Lastly, believe that the resurrection is a powerful reality (43). With Jesus’ words in verse 43, “Lazarus, come out!” Jesus powerfully changed the physical and spiritual position and condition of Lazarus from dead to living, from bound to free. This echoes Paul’s words in Romans 6 that those who are spiritually related to Christ—the baptized—are to walk now (present tense) in the newness of life.

This Lent, reflect on your relationship with the “I Am the Resurrection” Christ. Make your faith in him personal. That which you think is dead can be revived again (a dream, career, a relationship). Make your faith in him a “now” faith. Don’t wait to live glorifying God. Finally, expect a powerful, new walk, unweighted by past failures. So cancel those funeral flowers.

Let’s pray: I adore you God for being God, sovereign over death and essential for life. I confess my enslavement to deeds that have bound me. I thank you for the new, resurrected life I have in you through Christ. I pray for a walk that glories you.

Prepared by Rev. Olin Fregia, Ordained Minister, Biblical Communications Specialist, Writer. I am currently writing a book on forgiveness.

March 24

Friday, January 26, 2018
3:00 PM

This sparks a question from Thomas. “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” Jesus, you said that you are leaving us and that we cannot go with you now (13:36). We do not know where you are going. So how can we know the way to where you are going? Jesus’ response is powerful. This is the sixth “I am” statement made by Jesus. “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” The emphasis of the description is on “the way.” Thomas says that they do not know the way. Notice in verse 5, “How can we know the way?” Jesus says, “I am the way.” Jesus is the way to the Father and he is the truth of God and the life of God. Jesus is the truth because he embodies the supreme revelation of God. Jesus shows and narrates God. Jesus is the disclosure of God.

This is an interesting statement because Jesus does not simply say that he is blazing a trail and commanding others to take the way he takes. Rather, he is the way. The reality and truth of God are bound in Jesus. It is not simply, “Do what Jesus does.” It is more. He is the way. Therefore, come to Jesus for he is the path. True saving faith requires continuing belief in Jesus. Apart from Jesus, the world offers many things. But those offers are all godless, darkened, and deadly. Apart from Jesus, the way you are walking leads to eternal destruction. Jesus is the only way.

How is Jesus the way? Verse 7 elaborates. If you know Jesus, then you know the Father. If you believe in Jesus, then you believe in the Father. If you have a relationship with Jesus, then you have a relationship with the Father. Now think about what the first century disciples of Jesus were called by the world and even called themselves. They were called The Way (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22). As we have seen in book of Isaiah and in our study of the Gospel of John, we are joined with Jesus in his descriptions and promises. Jesus is light, and we are to be light. Jesus is the way and we are to be the way. We are to show the world the way to the Father. It is a God-given mission. The great commission is the call for us to be the way to Jesus for the world. In closing, Jesus gives the prescription for troubled hearts. Have faith in Jesus. He prepared a place for his disciples through the cross. We know the way to the Father's house: Jesus. Know Jesus. Follow Jesus. Obey Jesus. Love Jesus. Jesus is the way because if you know Jesus, then you know the Father. Then live as the way, showing the communities and people Jesus too.

Humbly Submitted by,

Rev. Myron Goins Sr. (Texas Christian Missionary Fellowship)

March 27

Wednesday, February 7, 2018

11:07 AM

Mark 12:41-44

The parable of the widow giving everything she has brings such a vivid image to my mind. In the temple there were the wealthy people giving large donations out of their abundance. They did so with much fanfare in hopes they would be recognized and applauded for their generosity. Then there was this poor woman, probably trying to slip by quietly unnoticed with her tiny offering. I can see her perhaps a little hunched over, hoping to make herself small or better yet, invisible. She just wanted to slide in and out, quietly giving back to her God as she was able. Who would possibly take note of her. Jesus did. He thought enough of it to share her story.

What great faith this widow woman must have possessed. She had no husband to support her, yet she willingly gave her only two coins. Perhaps during her long, hard life she had learned that her God would always provide for her needs. Do we sometimes forget that God will always provide for our needs. We can freely give of our treasures, time and talents never fearing that He will sustain us. We should see giving and serving not as something we do on our own, but something that God does through us.

One of the things I love the most about the parables Jesus shared, is that the stories are left open-ended. We are encouraged to draw our own conclusions and act on them. We were given free will so that we might prayerfully discern God's will for our lives.

The widow gave all that she had to give financially. Jesus gave all that He had to give when He gave His life for us. What can we be giving of ourselves

Gracious God, we thank You for the blessings You have given us so abundantly. May we share our treasures; not just our monies, but truly giving of ourselves. Help us to remember by joyfully giving of ourselves, we reflect Christ. In His name we pray. Amen.

Charlotte Stephens

First Christian Church - Denton

3rd generation Disciple, both my father and grandfather were ministers in the Christian Church

March 28

Thursday, February 8, 2018

11:48 AM

John 13:1-15 Jesus Washes The Disciples' Feet

Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end" (John 13:1).

John may have meant the end of a goal or task or the end of Jesus' ministry; the word *telos* can mean either. Jesus loved his own completely and the way he chose to show that love could not have been more striking. He took water and a towel and washed his disciples' feet, doing the work usually reserved for a slave.

His love was so complete that he washed the feet of Judas, the one he knew would betray him and the feet of those whom he knew would fail him in his darkest hour. Peter, the one who would later deny him to save his own skin, objected to Jesus washing his feet telling Jesus he would never wash his feet. Jesus told Peter unless he washed him he would have no part in him. Jesus was not talking about Peter's dirty feet but about the grace that Peter would later come to know and understand.

Only John's gospel recounts this part of Jesus's ministry. He and the disciples are at table for the Passover meal. Bread would have been blessed but John does not tell of Jesus using bread as a symbol of his broken body and the wine as his blood or the cup of the New Covenant. We often conflate the stories of "The Last Supper" just as we do the nativity, mashing all the accounts together, but this has intrigued me ever since I first realized that only John included the foot washing but omitted what we consider so important. If we had only John's gospel would we wash each other's feet as an act of remembrance of Jesus's sacrifice. Communion with bits of bread and small cups of grape juice demand little on our part and is not the least demeaning. Doing the work of a servant is something else; it may seem beneath your status and it may not be pretty or fragrant.

As I observe the state of the Church and Christianity in The United States it seems many have lost or never had the spirit of servanthood exhibited by Jesus who spent his time amongst the poor and outcasts of his day.

Political opinions have become gospel. The words of Jesus recorded in scripture seem to have lost importance in the churches thinking and direction. One prominent church leader said recently, "Look, Christianity is not all about being a welcome mat which people can just stomp their feet on", obviously forgetting or ignoring Jesus words, "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me." Fear of seeming to take sides and alienating members has caused the church to lose its prophetic voice and it neglects the examples and words of Jesus regarding the poor and powerless. (Matthew 15:31-46)

God of all mercy, forgive us when we easily accept grace offered by Jesus, forgetting his words and examples of how we should extend that grace to others. Amen

March 30

Thursday, February 8, 2018
11:48 AM

There came to a place called Golgotha (which means “the place of the skull”). There they offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with gall; but after tasting it, he refused to drink it. When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots and sitting down, they kept watch over him there. Above his head they placed the written charge against him “THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS”. Now came the time for the clash between good and evil, heaven and hell.

The crucifixion of Jesus is both the most horrific moment in human history, and humanity’s only hope. That’s why we call the Friday before Easter, Good Friday. Jesus followers were still too weak to understand, and so they scattered. The religious elite carried out their plot. The political leaders passed the buck, and in the end, they discarded Jesus for the sake of convenience. The crowds gawked. Two thieves hung on each side of a man whose crime was hard to comprehend. The placard above his head announced with biting sarcasm: King of the Jews. That must have attracted some attention.

We know of seven things Jesus said from that cross, including a pronouncement of forgiveness for the soldiers, provision for the care of his mother and a plea for something to wet his parched mouth. The last words on that last day of his natural human life were the most important: “It is finished!” That was not a cry of resignation, nor capitulation or surrender. It was a shout of victory that all that God had planned for the restoration of sinful human beings was now accomplished. Now there could be justification! Redemption! Reconciliation! All that needed to be done for the debt and scar of sin had been done. Forgiveness was now **FREE!!!!!!**

Mirror, Mirror on the wall: How does the crucifixion of Jesus most powerfully impact me?

Humbly Submitted,

Rev. Myron Goins Sr. (Texas Christian Missionary Fellowship)

March 31

Mark 15:40-47 NRSV

Our Scripture for today recounts the informal burial of Jesus after his crucifixion. Most of us know that it was Joseph who took Jesus' body off of the cross and laid in the tomb, but there are some details that sometimes get glossed over in the larger narrative. As I considered this text, two portions stuck out to me in verse 43. First, that Joseph was a "respected member of the council". Joseph was not a devout follower of Jesus, but a Jewish leader. He was probably present for Jesus' trial but most likely didn't agree with what happened. Some commentaries describe him as a sympathizer but not an actual follower. And yet, he cared for Jesus even in death. Remember, the act of touching a dead body would have made Joseph unclean for a portion of time and unable to participate in certain aspects of faith life. He didn't have complete faith in Jesus' saving power, but he had enough. Enough faith to know that such a holy man should not be left to the elements. Second, it notes that Joseph "went boldly" to Pilate. It wasn't his place to ask for Jesus' body. In fact, it was quite dangerous to offer care for someone who had been executed as a criminal. And yet, he did it. He knew the dangers, but believed enough to find it important to take this step.

Sometimes we struggle with being enough. Am I a good enough parent? Good enough student? Good enough child? Good enough boss? Good enough employee? As a new mom, there is a lot of pressure to be excellent at motherhood right off the bat. Comparing myself to other moms is an easy trap to fall into in which I can quickly begin to feel like not enough.

But I am enough.

You are enough.

Joseph had the possibility of belief in Jesus and it was enough for him to go boldly.

As we near the end of Lent, some of us may have kept up our Lenten Disciplines all 40 days. Others of us may have struggled and stopped early. Either way, we are enough. God knows our heart and loves us. Jesus is in the tomb today, but tomorrow is a new day filled with resurrection. Know that the still darkness of today, of our struggles is not forever. New life springs forth tomorrow.

God of All, grant me strength to know that I am enough. I may stumble, I may fall, but you are there to pick me up and make me whole. Direct my feet so that I may go boldly into the new day.

Amen.

Rev. Allison Drake, East Dallas Christian Church, I'm originally from Georgia, but fell in love with a Texan so I'm pretty sure I'm stuck here now.

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Written by the people listed below.

Date	Text	Team	Author	
14-Feb	Luke 2:41-52	Andy	anon	The Space Between
15-Feb	Matthew 3:8-14	Andy	Heather Reed	Preparing Our Hearts
16-Feb	John 1:1-18	Andy	anon	Word made Flesh
17-Feb	Luke 4:1-13	Andy	anon	Temptation of Christ

Calling

18-Feb	Luke 1:26-38	Andy	Christine Chenowith	Calling Mary
19-Feb	Matthew 3:1-6	Tasha	Marilyn Fidmont	Calling John
20-Feb	Mark 1:9-11	Nathan	Ron Rosignol	Calling Jesus
21-Feb	John 4:35-42	Evangelina		Calling Followers
22-Feb	Mark 1:16-20	Myron	Betty Brown	Calling Fishermen
23-Feb	Luke 6:12-16	Heather	Emily Williams	Calling Disciples
24-Feb	Mark 1:21-31	Bob	Dawn Rosignol	Calling Everyone

Teaching

25-Feb	Matthew 5:1-12	Andy		Jesus Begins to Teach
26-Feb	Matthew 5:21-26	Nathan	Nelson Torres	Jesus Teaches Reconciliation
27-Feb	Luke 6:32-36	Evangelina		Jesus Teaches Forgiveness
28-Feb	Matthew 6:19-21	Myron		Jesus Teaches Priorities
1-Mar	Matthew 18:15-20	Heather	Elizabeth Grasham	Jesus Teaches Community
2-Mar	John 3:1-17	Bob	Joe Weeks	Jesus Teaches Salvation
3-Mar	Matthew 7:24-27	Tasha	Linda Barnette	Jesus Teaches Discipleship

Welcoming

4-Mar	Luke 14:7-14	Andy		The Welcome Principle
5-Mar	Matthew 26:6-13	Evangelina		The Model Welcome
6-Mar	Mark 10:13-16	Myron		The Welcome Priority
7-Mar	Luke 10:38-41	Heather		The Conflicted Welcome
8-Mar	John 7:53-8:11	Bob		Radical Welcome
9-Mar	Mark 10:46-52	Tasha		Barriers to Welcome
10-Mar	Matthew 7:7-10	Nathan		God's Welcome

Parables

11-Mar	Luke 15:8-10	Andy		Parable of the Lost Coin
12-Mar	Mark 4:1-9	Myron		Parable of the Sower and the Seeds
13-Mar	Luke 18:1-8	Heather		Parable of the Persistent

			Widow
14-Mar	Luke 12:35-38	Bob	Parable of the Watchful Servants
15-Mar	Luke 10:25-37	Tasha	Parable of the Good Samaritan
16-Mar	Luke 18:9-14	Nathan	Parable of the Tax Collector and Pharisee
17-Mar	Luke 16:19-31	Evangelina	Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus
The I-Am Statement			
18-Mar	John 6:35-40	Andy	Bread of Life
19-Mar	John 8:12-20	Heather	Light of the World
20-Mar	John 10:7-10	Bob	Gate
21-Mar	John 10:11-18	Tasha	Good Shepherd
22-Mar	John 11:1-6-27	Nathan	Resurrection and the Life
23-Mar	John 15:1-11	Evangelina	The True Vine
24-Mar	John 14:1-7	Myron	The Way, the Truth, the Life
Toward the Cross			
25-Mar	Luke 19:29-40	Andy	Entering Jerusalem
26-Mar	Matthew 21:1-17	Bob	Cleansing the Temple
27-Mar	Mark 12:41-44	Tasha	Widow's Mites
28-Mar	John 13:1-15	Nathan	Washing Feet
29-Mar	Matthew 26:17-29	Evangelina	Lord's Supper
30-Mar	Mark 15:1-39	Myron	Crucifixion
31-Mar	Mark 15:40-47	Heather	Tomb