

2022

Lenten Lectionary



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Introduction Lent 2022

Thank you for choosing to read your Lectionary this year! We have, as the body of Christ, been tested this year, but we can emerge stronger in our faith. May each of the daily meditations help you grow during these trying times.

As I was praying about this year's Lectionary, a phrase from "Forward Day by Day" kept coming to my mind... "**carefulness in conversation**". I had been reading the book of Proverbs and was laughing at how many proverbs had to do with our mouths. My favorite that I read to Jim was, "Better to sleep on a corner of the roof than to live with a nagging wife." He is still threatening to move to the roof! I started Proverbs over and wrote down all the ones that were about talking. I had over four pages in my journal. I'll be glad to send them to you if you want!

Do you remember the ditty we sang on the playground when a child was mean to us?
"Sticks and stones may break my bones,
But words will never hurt me!"

I think that sing-song verse may have helped us in the moment, but that it is absolutely untrue. Words do hurt us, more often than sticks or stones. Have you ever been really upset with somebody and lashed out? Did it help to solve the issue or make it worse? When I remember to respond gently and lovingly, I can usually get the other person to see my side, and we can work out our problem. But I sometimes speak from my negative feelings and end up losing a friend.

Whom do you confide in? Is it the friend who is always talking about others' private business, or is it the friend who will listen and pray for you without telling the world your problems? And what type of friend do you want to be? Again, the words you use will determine your relationships in the future.

My challenge to you this Lent is to exercise "carefulness in conversation." Pay attention to your words BEFORE they leave your mouth. If they aren't something you'd be proud of later, then keep them to yourself.

Have a blessed Lent,
Helen C

"I will try this day to live a simple, sincere, and serene life, repelling promptly every thought of discontent, anxiety, discouragement, impurity, and self-seeking; cultivating cheerfulness, magnanimity, charity, and the habit of holy silence; exercising economy in expenditure, generosity in giving, **carefulness in conversation**, diligence in appointed service, fidelity to every trust, and a childlike faith in God. In particular I will try to be faithful in those habits of prayer, work, study, physical exercise, eating, and sleep, which I believe the Holy Spirit has shown me to be right. And as I cannot in my own strength do this, nor even with a hope of success attempt it, I look to thee, O Lord God my Father, in Jesus my Savior, and ask for the gift of the Holy Spirit." —*A Morning Resolve, Forward Day by Day*

Editor's note: These writings are the gifts of our authors. Please enjoy them and tell the author about your reactions. As always, our contributors come from all parts of the theological spectrum, and that is a good thing. We each find our path to God, and God loves us each exactly as we are.

March 3, 2022

Habakkuk 3:1-18 "I will rejoice in the Lord. I will exult in the God of my salvation."

Philippians 3:12-21 "...forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead"

John 17: 1-8 "know you, the only true God"

I eagerly await, every year, the chance to contribute to our Lenten Lectionary. And during Lent, I love reading, each day, the contributions of my fellow parishioners. This year, it seems such joy to be together in this way. Since Bob is 79 and I am 77, we have been content watching church on live stream, and deeply appreciating all those parishioners who have made that possible.

I feel as if, when I write, I am receiving my marching orders from God for the Lenten journey. When I was young, it was so simple, "I simply gave up something I didn't like anyway, like coffee." As I grew up, I tried giving up something I loved, with almost no results.

Now, I see this Lenten writing as the opportunity to be open to what God is calling me to do, so:

"I will rejoice in the Lord. I will exult in the God of my salvation."

"...forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead"

(knowing you), "the only true God"

"

In my life, God has called me in many ways: to go to the disabled in my early life as a physical therapist, to the homeless in my life at Options, and now, I hear God's call to go to wherever anyone isn't living an abundant life, as I know God wants for all of us.

My inspiration is a man I met at Options. He was sentenced to 200 years in prison at the age of 17, spent 14 years in solitary before the state of California decided that solitary confinement was cruel and unusual punishment. In prison he ended up in the Drug and Alcohol Counselor Training Program, which Options runs in 7 prisons, having trained enough counselors since the program began in 2008, to provide Drug and Alcohol Programs in all 35 California prisons. And, because he "turned his life around," he is a counselor at Options and is instrumental in shifting the pathway for juvenile justice from incarceration to restoration. Having been imprisoned, he greets every day with joy, thrilled to be out of prison, and able to contribute to others.

What fun it will be to see where God leads me. Finally, rather than being reluctant (it took me 9 years to actually answer God's call to go to the homeless, first heard in 1986, and answered in 1995), I am now looking forward to the Lenten journey, wondering what God will ask me to give up and what God will provide.

Thank you, my fellow parishioners, for always being the source of the courage and love in my walk with God. God loves each and every one of us, and each of us are called by God to be God's eyes, ears, hands and feet, with God's heart.

Peg M

March 4, 2022

Ezekiel 18:1-4

Philippians 4:1-9

John 17:9-19

Philippians 4:1-9 (NRSV) *Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved. I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you also, my loyal companion, help these women, for they have struggled beside me in the work of the gospel, together with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life. Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.*

This passage of Paul's letter to the Philippians has a lot to say to me in these times of struggles with environmental catastrophes, economic hardship, and illness caused by the pandemic. What we have in common with the people of Philippi at the time of this writing is a desire to find peace. Paul, once known as Saul, was person in charge of a fierce army whose aim was to destroy the Christians. One day he received a message from God that completely changed his life. From then on, he spent his life traveling to different places and talking about his experience and helping people connect with God through Christianity.

In this letter Paul acknowledges 2 women, Euodia and Syntyche, for their work in helping to spread God's word. Paul urges the community to support them and the other men who did the same. Paul urged both men and women to establish contact with God. His sermons were for everyone. He preached of a path that was joyous, gentle and worry free. Instead of trying to do things by oneself, he asked that they pray and make requests to God for help. Thanksgiving was also important because these things were possible only with God's help. He then asks them to strive for qualities including truth, honor, justice, and purity along with things that are pleasing, commendable, excellent, and worthy of praise. Will Paul's letter help us find peace? Try it and see.

Nora and Steve H

March 5, 2022

Ezekiel 39: 21-29
Philippians 4: 10-20
John 17: 20-26

Many years when I sit down and review the readings for my part of the Lenten Lectionary, I can find a common theme running through the three readings and a common inspiration about which to write. This year, that common theme eludes me. Perhaps more time in the “arts” classes and less in the “science” classes would have helped!

The book of Ezekiel in the Old Testament is said to have been inspired by the prophecies of the Prophet Ezekiel. Michelangelo shows the prophet in the Sistine Chapel leaning and looking forward with one hand open and the other holding a scroll. Ezekiel prophesized the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem and the exile of the Israelites to Babylon. He was a part of that exile. In the section of Ezekiel we read on this day, he talks about the causes the exile (the behavior of the Israelites), their eventual restoration to Jerusalem and the eventual restoration their fortunes. These events will show the world – not just the Jewish nation what a powerful and merciful God he is. His power and glory will be demonstrated for all to see and wonder at.

In the Epistle to the Philippians, Paul thanks them for the generous gift that they recently sent to him and asserts that he doesn't NEED what they have sent but he very much appreciates the generosity. He thanks them for their support in the past and acknowledges that they were the first to support his ministry. He shares with them his belief that God will reward them for their love and care for him.

It's hard to look on Christianity these days as a unified religion. It is far easier to see, talk about, write about, and debate the differences among the several “Christian” religions in the world today. In verses 20 through 26 of the 17th chapter of the Gospel John, Jesus prays to God that his followers and those that they bring to the faith in Jesus and God “may all be one”. Jesus came from a family with brothers (and probably sisters). He lived and traveled with the 12 disciples and probably more followers. He knew that one of the 12 would betray him. He knew that there was competition among the disciples – if only because 2 of them asked to be seated on either side of him in glory. He asks God to help his disciples, their followers, and the later followers to know Gods love and feel their oneness in the community of believers.

Perhaps the lesson we can take from today's several readings is that while it is easier to see blessings and togetherness when things in life are going well, it is critical that we look for and seek out the common things that hold us together and remind us of our shared blessings when life presents us with challenges and difficulties. Challenges and difficulties have been a part of the human condition for a very long time and are not likely to go away – no matter who is elected or how we plan. The practice of looking for what we have in common and how we are one can help us get through difficult times.

Sally S P

March 7, 2022

Old Testament: Genesis 37:1-11

Epistle: Corinthians 1:1-19

Gospel: Mark 1:1-13

Today's readings are first chapters, and as such, are analogous to the front door of our Lenten study for 2022. Recently, I have been engaged in pursuing a life-long fascination with the history of the United States. Contemporary readings have demonstrated how little we as citizens and people have changed since the founding of the country we all call home. Don't believe me? Get a copy of the Federalist Papers for a little light reading about the challenges Alexander Hamilton and friends were discussing while creating our Constitution.

Study of today's Scripture readings likewise, feels very familiar. The stories of the customs of that day, except for coexisting multiple wives, could be taking place today in our community with very little modification. Mutual concerns over alien versus native, jealousy of perceived favoritism and quarrels regarding our tribal memberships are certainly present in today's society. Enlightenment may be found in quiet reflection: a time of listening and exploring we call Lent.

Yes, there have been times I have been blessed by an "aha" moment when a concept became crystalized. Almost always, it has occurred in a respectful, open, honest, discussion of deeply held beliefs. For me, today's reading provided more of a question than an answer: How did people over two thousand years ago know us so well?

In meditating on this question, I can find areas of recent societal movement towards one based on respect and love for each other and God. I see progress regarding Women's rights, LGBTQ, racial understanding and responsibility for those in need. There is still much to be learned and progress to be made, but we may profit by giving Thanks since, without God's help, I do not think social progress would be possible.

Steve M

Tuesday, March 8, 2022

Genesis 37:12-24

1 Corinthians 1:20-31

Mark 1:14-28

Old Testament: Joseph is the “different/chosen” son & brother. He is also an irritation to his brothers as a result of the preferential treatment by their father, Israel. The brothers also hate him because of the beloved garment of many colors he proudly wears, as well as his many dreams he often speaks of. Unknown to his brothers is the destiny of Joseph. The solution the wicked brothers have decided upon, to end their perceived torment and hatred of Joseph, is to put Joseph to death. With God’s influence, one brother, Reuben, protested the killing of Joseph. In this reading, to my thinking, God responds by causing Reuben to convince his other brothers to not kill Joseph outright. The act of salvation of Joseph’s life is a profound miracle in order to fulfill God’s ultimate plan for his chosen people, through sparing Joseph’s life and ensuring his future. The message being: the evil of human beings can be overpowered by God to achieve His purposes.

Epistle: Thinking about these words of Paul, I am led to the conclusion that the descriptions of acts which are contrary to the gospel, and the matters of God are such that promoted divisions between greater things of religion as opposed to lesser things. False teachers spread doctrine contrary to the gospel and away from the truth and will of God. Those who receive the gospel and are enlightened by the Holy Spirit can know the message: Christ crucified is God’s power and wisdom. To my thinking, this comparison is not unlike today’s age, as well as from ages in the past, in terms of social communication. What to believe? Who to believe? What are facts? What are lies? As for myself, I rely on God to guide my faith through love and compassion and humility in my journey as I seek wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. I pray I will be fit for every service for which I am called.

Gospel: This chapter of Mark reflects upon Jesus, starting with the Ministry of John the Baptist and the events of him passing the grace of God to Jesus after John is jailed. Jesus gathers his disciples to join him. The disciples believe in Jesus who is the “Great Evangelist”, the messenger, teacher and Son of God. Jesus proclaims, “believe in the good news.” Jesus’ believers and evangelists were taught by “one having authority” and a teacher who commanded spirits to obey him. His fame spread throughout the region.

I am thinking of many examples that describe a group of people in need of a leader. In this case, the person is more than a simple leader, he is Jesus, the Son of God. However, not unlike many stories about various leader’s efforts to convince their chosen followers of their leadership, in this passage, Jesus performs an incredible miracle. The followers who witness the miracle are at once convinced of the power of the Son of God. There is an old saying “seeing is believing.” It was never truer in this scripture. For us that believe and have faith in God, the doctrine of Christ only underscores the Glory of God we will one day witness.

Mike M

March 9, 2022

Genesis 37:25-36 – Jealous brothers sell Joseph; see Joseph & Technicolor Dream Coat.

1 Corinthians 2:1-13 – Paul says, God's wisdom is beyond human wisdom – give Love a chance.

Mark 1:29-45 – Jesus' popularity skyrockets in Galilee by using his mysterious healing powers.

God Doesn't Make Sense

Does God make sense to you? The whole concept of God is beyond my comprehension. Joseph's older brothers sell him to slave traders and yet at the end of the story Joseph overcomes all this and rescues them years later. The author weaves a story of unlikely events to show how God can bring reconciliation -- give the characters recovery from separation to sensitivity. Does it make sense to you? This is not normal human behavior; this is way beyond better than that and yet believable. One can't help but cheer the joyful outcome of this amazing story.

Paul writes to the wealthy community in Corinth that he can't adequately explain or understand God except for a few pithy details, but somehow there is that mysterious portal in them (and us) that, when opened, allows the Spirit of God to permeate them (and us). He concludes this passage with the thought that what they have learned Spiritually is not by human wisdom, but by their individually and corporately allowing, what we would call the Holy Spirit, to enter them. This new spirit leads them onward. Something unexplainable has entered them by their choice and changed them. So too, you who are reading this have already received the Spirit previously from somewhere; this is to reinforce and remind you that you have it. If the Star Wars Yoda were Paul, Yoda would remind you in times of distress, "Use the Spirit, Luke!" What Paul doesn't say is, "Understand the Spirit." He says, "Use the Spirit!"

I want to frame today's Gospel in the same way. Jesus is doing all these miracles and achieving rockstar popularity to the point of being overwhelmed physically and emotionally. Yet then, and especially today, people often say this can be explained by some natural phenomenon and perhaps, "So what's the big deal." The point is that the Spirit entered many; they did not understand it. It just was in them. They did not understand it back then, and we do not understand it today either. This piece concludes with a leper being healed, such that he cannot possibly keep the secret of his feeling the spirit within him and must share it with world around him.

My conclusion is that God is really beyond my understanding. When I try to put my understanding on God, I have limited God to the boundaries of my understanding. My own expression is, "I put God in a box," constrained by my understanding. These stories and my own life experiences seem to indicate to me that God is annoyingly, and thankfully, beyond my understanding. During Lent and often during the year I wrestle and give thanks for that concept that God is simply working out God's purpose even if it is beyond my understanding.

Jim C

March 10, 2022

Genesis 39:1-23

Corinthians 2:14-3:15 (NRSV)

Mark 2:1-12

When he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. So many gathered around that there was no longer room for them, not even in front of the door; and he was speaking the word to them. Then some people came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. And when they could not bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and after having dug through it, they let down the mat on which the paralytic lay. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, "Why does this fellow speak in this way? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" At once Jesus perceived in his spirit that they were discussing these questions among themselves; and he said to them, "Why do you raise such questions in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Stand up and take your mat and walk'? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"--he said to the paralytic-- "I say to you, stand up, take your mat and go to your home." And he stood up, and immediately took the mat and went out before all of them; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!" Mark 2:1-12

Mark's Gospel demonstrates the power of faith and love. Jesus recognized that the friends of the paralyzed man were expressing their faith in God by bringing him to be healed. Finding the door blocked, they lifted him to the roof and lowered him into the room—all acts of faith. Without any hesitation Jesus forgave the man his sins while scribes silently questioned his authority—and then demonstrated his authority as the Son of Man by commanding the man to get up and walk. The scribes were amazed and glorified God at the sight.

Can you imagine the impact of that miracle on the friends of the paralytic? They had the faith and commitment to not only carry him to the house, put him on the roof, remove it and lower him into the house, but do it in faith? *But for* their faith their friend would not have been healed.

In my life I have been privileged to meet a number of '*but for*' people whose faith has driven their actions—changing the lives of people they encounter.

I believe we are all called to be '*but for*' people in our daily lives, allowing God to do the work/healing/reconciling that occurs when one acts out of faith.

Mike O

March 11, 2022

Genesis 40: 1-23

Corinthians 3: 16-20

Mark 2: 13-22

I was given my first Bible when I was quite young, even before I could read. I learned Bible stories in Sunday School, and even at that young age had my credulity strained. Stories of miracles and unbelievable occurrences stretched my sense of the possible and I questioned those out loud. There were two camps of thought among my elders: one said, "It is just a collection of old stories that people recorded to explain the connection between man and God, and you have permission to take them with a grain of salt," The other said, "Don't you dare to question the Bible! It is God's word, every bit of it!" I was not sure which was right, but left my options open. I had faith that one day I would understand what God intended me to know. I hoped as an adult to find instructive, if not literal, meanings in the pages of the Bible.

Some Bible stories are clear, and some are left for us to figure out. Which ones are meant for us to understand easily, and which are deliberately included as puzzles? We begin our attempts at UNDERSTANDING from the starting point of having FAITH. We want to believe what is put before us, but sometimes must approach the complex stories with an open mind and an open heart.

A frequent happening in Biblical stories is in the reading and interpreting of dreams.

In Genesis, we read that, while living in his father's home, Joseph had some very dramatic dreams. Joseph did not offer explanations of what the dreams meant, but his brothers accepted the dreams as threats to them. Joseph then endured jealousy, kidnapping, and slavery. Also, false accusation and imprisonment in Egypt. While in the Pharaoh's prison, Joseph interpreted the dreams of two of Pharaoh's disgraced servants. The knowledge of his skill at dream interpretation reached Pharaoh, who had had his own puzzling, symbol-filled dreams. Joseph told Pharaoh that the dreams predicted years of plenty and years of famine, and the Egyptians were able to plan accordingly. Joseph credited God with the gift of dreams and the ability to interpret them.

If we have the faith to accept the concept of interpretation of dreams as possible, we see it as one example of God relating with man. The man, in this case Joseph, is a conduit for a message from God, and it takes belief and commitment on Joseph's part of give it earthly context. He has the faith that God is working through him in a very unusual way.

In time I learned that even though we may not have immediate knowledge of what we are to learn from a Biblical story, we need to have the faith that one day it will appear clear to us. A guide for us may come from St. Anselm's writing in the 11th century. He said:

"I do not seek to understand so that I may believe,
But I believe so that I may understand. And what is more,
I believe that unless I do believe, I shall not understand."

Patty A

March 12, 2022

Genesis 41:1-13

1 Corinthians 4: 1-7

Mark 2: 23-3:6

Here we find Jesus minding his own business, walking with his disciples through a field of grain on the Sabbath. Horror of horrors, the disciples were plucking off the heads of grain as they walked. Now we are not told if they did this mindlessly or intentionally. I don't think it matters, the point to the ever present/ trouble making Pharisees, was that this was done ON the Sabbath. I can see it...the Pharisees raising their fingers pointing to Jesus, and self righteously saying that this is just not done, it's unlawful. Jesus took the opportunity to remind the ever-pious Pharisees what King David did when he and his companions were hungry, in need of food AND it happened to be the Sabbath. David knew that at the local synagogue there would be Bread of the Presence. The Priest was the only one allowed to consume that special bread and not "the vulgar public", as my Granny used to say. David took some of that bread and fed his men and himself. As Jesus reminded the Pharisees of this, he chided them, saying, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath...so the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath"! Ouch, that must have stung and angered the pious Pharisees. They did not wish to be reminded of what David had done. A gotcha!

Scripture isn't clear as to whether this next part of the story happened immediately after or sometime later, the time frame isn't the important part. Jesus entered the Synagogue one Sabbath and there was a man with a withered hand...and also the ever present Pharisees waiting to see what Jesus would do, ...again on the Sabbath. The Pharisees lying in wait, hoping to trap Jesus. Looking at the man and then addressing the Pharisees, Jesus asked, "Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath, to save, or to kill? They were silent, and he "looked at them in anger!" And he was grieved at their hardness of heart. As we know, the man's hand was healed. Seeing this, the Pharisees immediately left to report what had happened on the Sabbath.

It never ceases to amaze me of Jesus' patience and kindness. It is also a good thing to know that occasionally he would lose that patience, get angry, lose his cool. During Lent we're encouraged to make sacrifices, increase prayers, do extra Bible study, etc. Perhaps showing more patience and tolerance...are there exemptions for dealing with the crazy drivers on the freeways? I'll work on showing patience on 680 from the 580 exchange to Martinez to begin with, and see how that goes! Prayers accepted.

Now in Year 3 of the Pandemic we still are making adjustments in our lives, yearning for how things used to be, and praying for Normalcy. As to whatever Normalcy will be for us, I don't know. I can say that I am very grateful for St. Timothy's, clergy, staff, and parishioners who have helped me during this difficult time. God is good.

Lenten Blessings,
Patti F

March 14, 2022

Genesis 41:46-47

In this scripture, Joseph worked the harvest and saved for seven years which prepared him favorably for the severe famine in the land of Egypt. He predicted the famine, and with his two sons he was able to survive. Having been raised in a very modest family in Mississippi, I am still very conscious of 'saving for a rainy day.' The pandemic has made us all more aware of the unexpected changes in our world and in our lives. Joseph said, 'God has made me forget all of my hardships...and made me fruitful in the land of my misfortunes.' How blessed I am to realize that God has also given me that gift. Today I am blessed beyond expectations, similar to Joseph.

1 Corinthians 4:8-21

Even though I did not expect the scriptures to be related, this passage also addresses those who have and those who have not. I am reminded that the Kingdom of God "depends not on talk but on power." What would you prefer? Am I to come to you with a stick, or with love in a spirit of gentleness?" This is an age-old struggle for me as a mom and a former teacher, and now with our two new furry rescues. Discipline – how do we always know how much to 'spare the rod,' and yet teach consequences along with respect? As a teacher, I was always able to remember the song from Camelot, "How to treat students (a woman)? Just Love them, simply love them!" It was easier for me as a teacher than as a parent. For having my 200 students for one hour a day allowed me to have patience, energy, enthusiasm and LOVE. As a parent, I also had to have consequences and responsibility 24 hours a day. Now as new parents for our furry rescues, we try to find the balance between 'loving them,' and 'training them' (even though they are not babies) into becoming well adjusted and obedient dogs. I somewhat saw this struggle in this passage which offers some comfort. When I read about these struggles in the scriptures, it almost seems 'normal' to have these challenges.

Mark 3: 7-19

When Jesus departed to the sea, He had to instruct his disciples to protect Him from the masses so that He would be able to cure those whom He knew were in greatest need. Decisions have often been difficult for me in knowing how much 'to help' while trying to keep a balance between 'helping' and 'enabling.'" It is encouraging to see that Jesus also had to make hard choices during this time of His mission in helping and healing. It also reminded me that He sought help by appointing His 12 apostles to 'to proclaim the message and to have the authority to cast out demons.'" I am often reluctant to ask for help; yet, Jesus gives us the perfect example of needing and seeking help when necessary.

These three scriptures reminded me of the necessity of trying to be prepared for unexpected circumstances, to recognize the struggles that Jesus faced in the good and evil of people, and to understand the importance of 'not the talk of arrogant people but their power.' Loving in a spirit of gentleness is the real power. In conclusion, as I have read the scriptures several times, I was reminded that Jesus walked among the people, and with all of his gifts, He, too, needed help and was able to seek and gain the help He needed. I pray that I can take these lessons with me and to appreciate and cherish the comfort of our church family at St. Timothy's.

Margaret B

March 15, 2022

Genesis 42:1-17

1 Corinthians 5:1-8 (NRSV)

Mark 3:19-35 (NRSV)

Today's Gospel seems to continue Jesus' theme of, "no good deed goes unpunished." Every time Jesus does something good, there are those of us who try to use it against Him. Now, after healing many, and with a crowd gathering to see Him, the scribes accuse Jesus of being a "ruler of demons," since that would be the only way He could do the amazing things He has been doing. Jesus is quick in his rebuke, first questioning any logic for why a demon would cast away demons. And second, reprimanding them for calling all the good that has come to those that believe as the work of evil. They not only failed to see the light, but also called the light darkness. This is not unforgivable.

If it were today, I could only image what these scribes would be saying about Jesus on Facebook. I also wonder how many "likes" their posts would have received from the people of the time. Not hard to see why. We live in an ever-changing world, with many challenges, and each of must continue to evolve as we learn to live and love together. That can cause uneasiness if not fear. Social media and "entertainment news" sometimes make it hard to really know and understand each other. Through misinformation, fear of change, or just plain laziness, I wonder if I sometimes pass judgement on others without understanding who they are, what good they have done, and what love they hold in their hearts.

I wonder...am I in the crowd following Jesus, or am I one of the people hitting the "like" button on the scribe's Facebook post – subverting the truth...rejecting the light as fake news? I pray for God's help to give me the clarity and strength to always seek, see, and embrace the right path.

Mark ends today's Gospel with Jesus saying to the crowd, including the scribes, "whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother." To me, this calls out the incredible bond that exists within our faith community, and the incredible support and strength this provides me. He does not refer to His followers as friends or neighbors...He refers to them as family. It also stuck me that He calls to "whoever" (and not solely the Jews), and to "sisters and mother" (and not solely his "brothers"). Seems to be telling me that my faith community spans gender, age, and even religion, and the strongest support in seeking the light may come from the least expected place. What an amazing gift!

John G

Wednesday, March 16, 2022

Genesis 42: 18-28—Joseph puts the money back in his brothers' sacks

1 Corinthians 5:9-6:8—Don't associate with a believer who is immoral

Mark 4: 1-20—“Listen! A sower went out to sow....”

We've all heard the parable of the sower. Some seeds (aka: the Word) fell on the path and were eaten by the birds. Some fell on rocky ground and died quickly. Some fell among the thorns, which choked it out. But some fell into good soil and brought forth good grain. The disciples want to know what it means and are told that it is difficult to bear fruit.

If you are like me, you immediately think, “I'm so glad that I'm in the good soil!” But then you start to worry, “How about when.....?” I look back over times in my life when I was in an emotional/theological place where the seed was withering away.

Some seed fell on the path and was eaten by birds... I was sure as a young college student that I had the correct facts about the Christian faith and that you had to believe like me to get to heaven. Then I became involved in an organization that claimed I was wrong. I used to run until I was exhausted, batting my head, and crying to God, “I thought that I believed in You! Why can't I have a born-again moment so I can be called a Christian?” My faith was severely tested because my faith experiences weren't the same as that of others. Those birds pecked at me until I almost lost my faith.

Some seed fell on rocky ground and died quickly... My rocky ground has been my self-assuredness. Someone more spiritually mature than me would make a comment, or give advice, and I would blithely ignore it because I thought I knew better. Rather than growing more spiritually, my soul would wither a bit more.

Some fell among the thorns, which choked it out... The barbs and anger of a few family members had caused me so much pain that my faith was choked out. I remember crying out, “God, I know You are there, but I can't feel You!” The feeling that God was absent just about destroyed my faith. But God in His goodness sent friends to be with me and weep with me and help me come back to center. God never left; I had just focused on the thorns.

But some fell on good soil and brought forth good grain... My goal is to be grateful for the good soil. Good soil, to me, is the fellowship of other Christians. When I hear the Word at church or in my Bible Studies, I try to accept the lessons I learn so that I can bear fruit, “thirty and sixty and a hundredfold.”

Lenten blessings,
Helen C

March 17, 2022

Genesis 42: 29-48

1 Corinthians 6: 12-20

Mark 4:21-34

My first impression of this reading was WOW, 12 verses and 4 parables. How do you cover that in a couple of paragraphs? But in reading it again, I saw that perhaps the real message is about how, with “such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; he did not speak to them except in parables”. More important than any one parable is the fact that *this* is the way Jesus chose to teach. Not with books, not with lectures, not with instructions, nor lists or commandments.

With parables we are engaged, we are puzzled, we are surprised. Because there is no *one* answer, we keep going back to look for hints and clues as to the “true answer”. Parables are little stories with layers that can be peeled back, one by one. They speak to us as we “are able to hear it”. We “hear it” today, and we will “hear it” anew tomorrow, and each day thereafter. When we engage the story, we identify with one aspect of it at one time and the next time something else will move us, speak to us, transform us. The beauty and power of parables is that they are new, *each* time we hear them.

These stories aren't linear. They loop back on themselves. They have conflict and challenge. They don't always make sense in our world, which is fine, because they are about God's world: God's world that we are called to help design, to help build, to help populate.

Parables call us to question and to live with ambiguity. They call us not to “just live with it”, but to really *live* with it, in the same sense that we live our lives. We explore, stumble, experience, and grow; that is real life and really living.

The core message here is the *way* Jesus taught. *We* are to find our path, to find our place to, find our way. *This* road trip is much more about the path and the journey than it is about any one destination. Because Jesus, our companion on this road trip, keeps telling us these crazy wonderful stories that touch our hearts, open our minds, and move our souls.

Lisa P

Friday, March 18, 2022

Genesis 43:1-15

1 Corinthians 7:1-9

Mark 4:35-41

The Gospel of this date speaks to the time when Jesus calmed the storm. The disciples and Jesus had left a gathering where Jesus had just spoken. They were taking a boat across a large body of water when a large storm came on suddenly and they were in danger of being swamped and sunk. In their panic, the disciples awake Jesus and he calms the seas. He asks them if they still have no faith. This passage is the story of faith. Do you believe and how will you act in difficult times? In our times of our greatest peril and challenges do we have the ability to keep the faith? It does not always mean that it all will turn out ok. However, we learn from many of our lives' most challenging moments that we have to keep our faith and calm the storm in our heart and minds to be able to weather the storms we all will certainly face.

The Old Testament passage is the preamble to Joseph meeting and forgiving his brothers. It is a lesson for all that there is a response for all actions. The brothers in this passage do not yet know it is Joseph they are going to meet. However, they are worried about the questions they are being asked and the risks they face when going to get more food from Egypt.

The final thoughts I take from these readings are that of:

1. We all face adversity in our life and with our faith we can tackle these difficult times.
2. The storms of our life will end, and we need faith and strength to navigate the challenges during the darkest hours.
3. Forgiveness and redemption will come if we are accountable for all our actions.

Jim P

Saturday, March 10, 2012

Genesis 43:16-34: "Rest assured, do not be afraid, your God and the God of your father must have put treasure in your sacks for you; I received your money."

1 Corinthians 7:10-24: "...let each of you lead the life that the Lord has assigned, to which God has called you."

Mark 5:1-20: Go home to your friends, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and what mercy he has shown you."

Each of these readings seems to suggest some advice that seems nearly impossible to follow:

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"Rest assured, do not be afraid, your God and the God of your father must have put treasure in your sacks for you; I received your money."

I certainly have an idea of the guilt that Jacob's brothers must have felt because of their past behavior towards him. I also know about having fear of others, when I have treated them badly. And as we follow this story, Joseph's brothers never really own up honestly to how they had treated Joseph in the past. As a result, they continue to blame and suspect Joseph, even though he has assured them of his forgiveness, and has assured them that God had used their actions for the good of all of them.

..."let each of you lead the life that the Lord has assigned, to which God has called you."

In the second reading, I realize that I don't spend much time attempting to discern the life that the Lord has assigned to me and to which he has called me. I, like many other humans, have thought that free will has meant that I can choose to do whatever I want.

Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and what mercy he has shown you."

In the Gospel, I can understand the demon-possessed man wanting to go with Jesus. Imagine going and telling everyone how much Jesus has done for me, when the miracle that occurred has meant that I notice the loss my friend's livelihood. What is mercy for me, having my "insanity" removed, has meant loss for all of my community.

So this Lent, please, Lord, help me to accept your amazing grace, particularly in those places where I have purposefully hurt others, and help me realize that you can work anything for good, for me and for others. Also, Lord, help me to spend more time listening for the life that you have called me to, rather than being so self-directed. And, help me to let my friends know how much you have done for me. When I came to you, Lord, I was lost, and I only had to turn to you and ask for you to enter my heart and since that day, in 1980, life has been a miraculous journey of healing. And on this day, Lord, let me remember my Mother, one of your saints, who has never stopped praying for me and my family. If she had lived, she would have been 109 today. I can imagine her, Lord, reminding you continually of her beloved daughter, son in law, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Peg M

March 21, 2022

Genesis 44:18-34

1 Corinthians 7: 25-31

Mark 5: 21-43

“Do not fear, only believe.” Mark 5: 36a

Today’s Gospel is the story of Jairus, a synagogue leader, who asks Jesus to come heal his daughter. But while they are going to his house, word comes that the little girl has died. Jesus tells them that the child is NOT dead, only asleep. And they laugh at Him. Imagine their chagrin when, a few moments later, Jesus leads the child downstairs.

“Do not fear, only believe,” said Jesus. Jairus was terrified for his daughter’s sake, but he set his fear aside and believed.

In the same reading, the woman who was tormented with twelve years of hemorrhaging dared to touch Jesus’ cloak as He passed by. She was made an outcast by her illness, but her faith in Jesus’ healing overcame her fear of her neighbors. “Do not fear, only believe.” And she was healed.

I remember times in my life where I was afraid. Usually, it was when I was facing an unknown situation, and had no idea what lay ahead. Will my new roommate like me? Will I find a job before my finances run out? Will my children get over this rough spot? I wish I could say that I immediately turned to God, and all was well. Truthfully, I fussed and I fumed and I worried, and when nothing else worked, I turned to God. And things didn’t miraculously go right, but the peace I felt in letting the fear go allowed me to navigate the situation better.

Are there times in your life when your fear brings you to a halt, unable to go on? Turn to Jesus as Jairus and the woman did. Do not fear, only believe.

Helen C

March 22, 2022

Genesis 45: 1-15
1 Corinthians 7: 32-40
Mark 6: 1-13

When I have written a lectionary reflection in the past, I have usually been able to read commentaries and related material on reading for “my” day and find some common theme to use as a starting point for writing. This time it was difficult. All three readings talk about families and communities and their relationships but beyond that I didn’t find a common theme.

The story of Joseph and his forgiveness of his brothers when they come to Egypt seeking help due to the wide-spread famine in the region is a familiar one. Forgiving the people who thought about killing him and then sold him into slavery seems incredibly generous. Perhaps he recognized that they had grown and changed in the years since they hated and envied him for being the “favorite” son. After all, Judah does offer to take the place of the innocent younger brother, Benjamin, who is caught with the gold cup (planted by Joseph) in his bag of grain. Perhaps Joseph believes that this is the only way to see his beloved (and over-indulgent) father again and protect him from the five additional years of famine that he knows are coming. Or perhaps Joseph is representative of the forgiveness of God who gives it to us even when we don’t deserve it. I believe that all of us need forgiveness many times in our lives. Few, if any, of us are capable of living the caring, selfless life that never does or says things that hurt others – whether we mean to or not. I believe that remembering this and the generosity of God as shown by Joseph will help us find it easier (but perhaps not EASY) to forgive others.

In the letter from Paul in 1 Corinthians he discusses whether it is better to be married or to remain single. This and his discussions in other epistles have been used to explain the Catholic Church insistence on celibate priests and to give them a special position and authority. According to the material I found, Paul was trying to settle a dispute among the members of his new church in regarding whether asceticism (the doctrine that through renunciation of worldly pleasures it is possible to achieve a high spiritual or intellectual state) is required to be a good member of the church. In essence, Paul seems to say that people should continue in the way that they have chosen and live in a state that brings the least anxiety. For himself, the single life seems to work best but he recognizes that for some men being married was preferable (“If anyone believes he is not behaving properly toward his fiancée, if his passions are strong, and so it has to be, let him marry as he wishes; it is no sin.”) Of course, in the next sentence he says that the man who finds that he can control his desires and refrains from marriage “does better!” Even in the early church people seem have found it challenging to accept and welcome people with different lifestyles and preferences into the community. I’m not sure if I find it depressing or comforting that this difficulty existed 2000 years ago and continues today.

In the Gospel reading for today we hear about Jesus’ reception when he comes to bring his message to his hometown. Here among the people who knew him when he was growing up and know his family, he doesn’t find the kind of welcome and reception that enables him to cast out demons and show his power. Here he can only heal a few sick people. How human of the people in the town he came from to not be able to see and accept the changed Jesus with his powerful teachings, but to cling to their outdated ideas of what he can do and the worth of his ideas. Following this underwhelming reception, Jesus sends his disciples out to preach, heal and cast out demons. Perhaps reflecting his reception at home, he tells them to “shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them” if a place does not welcome them. It feels like he is telling them and us to not get bogged down in trying to change the minds of those who do not agree with you but to move on to do the work that is to be done.

Sally S P

March 23, 2022

Genesis 45:16-28 (NSRV)

1 Corinthians 8 (NSRV)

Mark 6:13-29 (NSRV)

In the text before the **Genesis** reading, Joseph has forgiven his brothers for having tried to kill him. They had come to Egypt to buy food for their families. Joseph proclaimed that it was God who put the brothers up to killing him in preparation for his roll in helping the people survive the 7-year famine that was to come. When Pharaoh heard Joseph's brothers were present, he commanded Joseph to provide for their present needs and bring them to be with Joseph. We have heard it said many times that God can work in mysterious ways. Isn't this a good example?

I believe I have experienced this numerous times when I slow down enough to think and ponder about a series of events that I had no control over that led to some very welcomed conclusions. Maybe, this has been the situation for many of us. It is so easy to claim it was just luck or fate. I would like to believe that it was God at work in our lives. I need to always reject the little thought that could seep into my thinking that it was a reward for something I had done prior to that. I don't want to believe that we live in an action/reward relationship with God.

I would rather believe that when I accepted Christ into my life, that I let the Holy Spirit direct my actions. In doing so, I have come to believe that we each are internally guided to put ourselves into situations with others when we can be of service, help out, lend a hand, etc. and sometimes good things happen. I am thinking that I am not alone in this line of thought. I do recognize that it can be a struggle sometimes to do what the Spirit is saying versus what I would like to do. I like the saying, "What would Jesus do"? That can sometimes be a hard question to answer and respond to accordingly. If I listen, the Spirit will usually win and, when I don't, then I am in the situation where I need to say "I'm sorry and will do better next time." It is so much better to be able to say, "Thanks for the opportunity, guidance, the idea," when something good happened. My prayer is to always be listening for what the Spirit has to say.

In **Corinthians**, the focus in this scripture uses eating food and idols. I personally found the first half of this reading a little confusing, eating food sacrificed to idols vs. not, it makes no difference. "Food will not bring us closer to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do." Our actions are what is important. If we say one thing and do the opposite, our actions might cause others say "what difference does it make what one does?"

I translate the example here to be careful of my actions and the example I set before others. We have heard the saying, "be careful how you live your life; you may be the only Bible a person reads". Our actions every day is what others see.

My prayer is to be an example of the life Christ would want me to live. Even if I fall short, I will just keep trying.

Joe C

Thursday, March 24, 2022

Genesis 46:1-7, 28-34

1 Corinthians 9:1-15

Mark 6:30-46

When we pause to pray, we actively resist our natural inclination to push forward in our own strength and instead leave room for the Lord's power to work through us.

The miracle of the loaves and the fishes is the only one recorded by all four gospel accounts. Interestingly, Mark's account (likely based on Peter's preaching) begins with the apostles' return from their first mission trip, excited to tell Jesus about their success. They had relied on God for their needs and experienced God's miraculous power.

Maybe we can relate to how the disciples might have been feeling. Think back to a time when you completed a daunting task and achieved a big success. Maybe you prepared well and landed your dream job. Perhaps you studied hard and aced an exam. Perhaps you patiently waited for an opportunity and a door opened that exceeded your expectations. Often, success brings a feeling of pride and satisfaction which can be so intoxicatingly energetic and lovely. It is in moments like these that we often want to excitedly share our story with the first person who will listen. However, in the gospel account, instead of building on their momentum and encouraging the disciples to preach to the next crowd, Jesus invites them to "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while."

One commentator writes, "Without much solitary communion with Jesus, effort for Him tends to become mechanical... It is not wasted time which the busiest worker, confronted with the most imperative calls for service, gives to still fellowship in secret with God. There can never be too much activity in Christian work, but there is often disproportioned activity, which is too much for the amount of time given to meditation and communion."

Returning to the narrative we read that after resting with Jesus, ever so briefly, the disciples leave the boat to encounter a rally of 5,000 Christ followers on the shore. After teaching, Jesus attends to the crowd's physical needs by miraculously multiplying five loaves of bread and two fish to feed everyone and have leftovers. The commentator writes, "Jesus uses our resources, scanty and coarse as five barley loaves, for the basis of His wonders... Our small abilities, humbly acknowledged to be small, and laid in His hands, will grow."

When we pause to pray, we actively resist our natural inclination to push forward in our own strength and instead leave room for the Lord's power to work through us.

-Thomas J

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Friday, March 25, 2022

Genesis 47: 1-26

1 Corinthians 9:16-27

Mark 6:47-56

There is a common theme of compassion and healing in these three passages. Each of these passages has examples of how to help others in very big ways. The average person won't be working with Pharaoh to establish slavery or working situations for whole communities or countries. And certainly, the average person won't be healing multitudes of people on the ground like Jesus did. The Epistle does discuss ways that ordinary people can help others heal or move forward. Paul says, "I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some". The ordinary person will not be all things to all people. To us, the Epistle describes the qualifications required to be a healer. The average person can accomplish the steps towards healing for him or herself or someone else.

Thomas and I are no experts on addiction. However, the best counselors are those who have been there and understand what goes on with a person who has an addiction. The best weight loss consultants have also struggled with weight, so they know many of the challenges facing a weight loss journey. Athletic coaches can relate to the athletes because they were in the very same situation. And we think that what Paul is really saying in 1 Corinthians, is that to be an effective healer (and teacher) that having compassion, empathy, and having experienced the situation enables the person to really connect with those who need their services.

How can an ordinary person be a healer? We think it begins by listening and understanding the one who is facing a difficult situation. Stepping into that person's shoes for a moment can be a good start. Sometimes one needs a big hug. That is the compassion part. We may not have experienced the exact same situation as the one who needs an ear, but we can validate that what they feel is real, and much of the time, it is the beginning of finding a solution. It depends on the situation, but recommending a person, place, or thing can also help with an issue. Also, add a prayer. Do this with and without the afflicted present. Repeat these steps as needed.

We think Jesus calls us to be healers in whatever capacity we can. Even the youngest of us are called to be kind and helpful to each other. We may not be able to fix a situation. But we can help the person facing difficulties go through it and make a difference in his or her life.

Blessings,

Cathy and Thomas H

March 26, 2022

Genesis 47:27-48:7 - Brief foreshadowing story about Joseph and Jacob and Bethlehem
1 Corinthians 10:1-13 – “So if you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall.”

Mark 7:1-23 – Jesus Vs. Pharisees – “.. what comes out of a person defiles.”

Jesus is Condemned

Lent is that special time in the Liturgical Calendar when we are given the challenge and opportunity to prayerfully consider our own relationship with God. Traditionally it has been a time of giving up something or adding a discipline to our life to make us ever mindful of our relationship with God and Jesus. Perhaps it is confusing and perhaps a bit trite to some as a liturgical practice without meaning. Some practices of Christianity do not subscribe to Lent as a time of preparation for Easter, and our Risen Lord. I need and cannot imagine doing without the Lent, not so much as that I do it well – I do not – I botch it almost every time. I once gave up chocolate with only moderate success, and once I was dumb enough to think that I could give up meat for Lent. Bad choices for me! – I was just plain more unpleasant than usual during those failed attempts at preparing myself for the Risen Lord. So that leads to the questions of what would help in preparing my heart and mind for the Risen Christ?

Perhaps it is in this Gospel reading that might give me a key for this Lent. Jesus said to the Disciples by way of explanation of his recent interchange with the Pharisees' traditional behavior, “*It is what comes out of a person that defiles.*” And so I got to thinking that a good thing to do for Lent is to examine what I have done, left undone, said or not said that might be considered as condemning Jesus (Station One pictured below). Perhaps by prayerfully and honestly considering my own faults and transgressions, I can be better prepared to change myself for the Risen Lord and His Forgiveness.

Jim C



Monday, March 28, 2022

Genesis 49: 1-28

1 CORINTHIANS 10: 14-11:1

Mark 7: 24-37

The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. -- I Corinthians 10: 16-17

“One bread, one body, one Lord of all,
One cup of blessing which we bless.

And we, though many, throughout the earth,
We are one body in this one Lord.”
--"One Bread, One Body" by Fr. John Foley

What a joy it was for me to discover that my random sign-up date for this lectionary turned out to reflect my favorite hymn! For many years, this was the traditional (and often ecumenical) song that was played and sung as fellow worshipers went to take Communion.

To me, this reading from First Corinthians suggests unity for all mankind. It does not differentiate between race or nationality or sex or status. We would all sing together the chorus of the song, “One bread, one body, one Lord of all.” In spite of our worldly differences, we are one people in God’s view.

During the past two years, I have been reminded daily of the divisive aspects of our world. We have all struggled with the spread of COVID, with political discord and demonstrations, with gun violence, and with environmental issues, to name a few. However, I see hope and promise when I quietly hum John Foley’s beautiful song. To me, these words sum up the message of our Corinthian passage for today. Be considerate and respectful of the views of others. We do not have to agree with each other in order to be kind. The final verse of our passage today says it all: “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.”

Gayle L

March 29, 2022

Genesis 49:29-50:14
I Corinthians 11:17-34
Mark 8:1-10

Jacob is explaining where he wants to be buried in the Genesis passage. The burial place was a sacred place, which contains the last remains of his other family members who have gone before him, and his wife. His son, Joseph, respects his father's wish, and seeks permission from Pharaoh to go to the burial location. Joseph's brothers are now concerned that Joseph will exact his revenge on them for their previous actions against him, when he was captured by the Egyptians. However, Joseph assures his brothers he will not seek revenge. He claims that God intended the actions which Joseph experienced for a greater good.

Does this mean God causes bad things to happen in order to bring good from them? My answer is no, God can bring good from bad, but God does not intentionally cause bad to occur. So often we will experience a setback of one type or another, and will interpret those setbacks as being detrimental to our existence. I have always felt that the phrase "every cloud has a silver lining" applies to these situations, as every major event that happens to us is for a reason. God has a plan, and we fit into that plan every moment we are alive.

In the verse from Paul's letter to the Corinthians, he describes his offensive reaction to the humiliation of the disadvantaged. Paul reminds his readers of the events which took place on the night of betrayal against the Lord Jesus, and what the Lord did for his disciples and his followers: that being the premise with respect to the Eucharist, which is meant to be a symbolic meal, rather than a real meal. In the case of the example in this chapter, the wealthy and prosperous are not about to share any more than they have to with anyone else, especially those who are of a lower social class.

In my reaction to this passage, I feel the message is for us to be the judge of no person, as well as to resist the temptations of greed and self righteousness. Rather, we should strive to be loving and accepting of all mankind, and share what we have with those less fortunate than ourselves. The message is that of love, not hate or selfishness. As we reflect during Lent, we are encouraged to look inward, and find the hidden love and compassion for God and mankind.

The reading from Mark deals with the feeding of Jesus' disciples and 4,000 followers, by Jesus. The disciples only have seven loaves of bread, and a few small fish. Jesus expresses pity and sympathy for his followers, as they have been with him for three days, and have nothing left to eat. Jesus took the seven loaves of bread, broke them, and gave them to his disciples, who in turn placed them before the crowd, and all were fed. As well, he blessed the few small fish, and all of the crowd ate fish and were satisfied.

I believe that having faith in God is the right path, and when followed, will provide for those believers. As in this reading, the faith of the disciples and the 4,000 followers was enough, and their need for food was fulfilled by God, through Jesus. As we look toward organizations such as Loaves & Fishes and the Monument Crisis Center, as well as our own parish support program for the Winter Night's Shelter, we are reminded to give. Not only to give, but to be part of the giving, and to be present to those who need our presence, and to make a conscious effort to become a bearer of the light of God.

Mike M

March 30, 2022

Genesis 50:15-26
1 Corinthians 12:1-11
Mark 8:11-26

Today's readings emphasize the power of forgiveness, and celebrate the gifts that God gives to those who follow his way. In the reading from Genesis, we see how Joseph's father forgave his wicked sons, despite the wrongs they did to Joseph. They follow his deathbed instructions and ask Joseph to forgive their crimes against him. Joseph weeps, and in reaction his brothers fall down before him and weep, and all is forgiven, and they live together in harmony and peace.

Infused in each of these actions is a pure, unwavering love; a love so powerful that it could forgive horrible crimes. Note how the unselfish and loving act of forgiveness spread. One unselfish act led to another and was transforming to all touched by the love. This is God's primary message to the world, to love all God's people so much that we can forgive even their wrongs against us. This goes way beyond simply turning the other cheek, which is a passive act. God asks each of us to aggressively, passionately and wholly love all, and by giving that love unselfishly transform those we come in contact with and thus spread good throughout the world. The power of love and forgiveness can transform the world, one act at a time.

The three readings also speak of God's rewards for following his path of love. Joseph lives a long life immersed in the love of family and the wider community. He dies assured that the love he bestowed on others caused them to love him enough to carry his body after death to the Promised Land.

The second reading tells us how the Holy Spirit bestows unique spiritual gifts that further the ability of the recipient to spread God's love; they are given "for the common good". The recipient of the gift becomes a conduit, spreading wisdom, knowledge, healing and other good works among the people. You probably have noticed how doing a good deed can make you feel good about yourself. Thus, the gift of common good reaps rewards to the person who uses God's gifts to help others. Again, we see the theme of spreading God's gift. It is a win-win. In giving, we receive back.

The Gospel reading adds another layer to God's message of how to spread his love. He teaches us by example to take our ego out of the picture. Jesus refuses to glorify himself by providing the sign which the Pharisees requested. He performs his miracle of healing a blind man in a manner that obscures his role in the spreading of the good deed. He thus instructs us to perform our good deeds out of pure love, and not for our own glory.

During this Lenten season we should work to remove bitterness from our hearts. Instead, we should try to develop and spread a pure, unselfish love. Our small acts of forgiveness could be a catalyst that spreads love throughout the world, and thus transforms it for the better. Jesus' Sermon on the Mount sets forth specific examples of how each of us can act in a manner that will spread God's love not for our glory, but for the glory of God. This Lenten season, find the time to read or re-read that Sermon, and see how it might transform your life, and those of others, for the greater good and the glory of God.

Bruce S

Thursday March 31, 2022

Exodus 1:6-22

1 Corinthians 12:12-26

Mark 8:27-9:1

Deuteronomy 8:18: But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today.

I have chosen to write about this particular passage because Lent is a time for us to revisit our belief in God.

In this particular passage Moses reminds the Israelites about their 40 year hard journey in the desert, during which time they were tested by God. Moses further tells his people that they have now been delivered into a world of plenty, and not to forget the ways of the Lord. They are constantly reminded of all the miracles, and how they were tested during the wanderings.

I believe that I, as a Christian, tend to stray at times, not being grateful for all he has provided me within this life. And not only worldly goods, but his love and compassion, as well. There are times when our daily lives just get in the way of our belief in God and that he will provide for us.

God provided me with strength during the restructuring of my daily life after my husband died. I am eternally thankful that I was able to draw upon my faith in him. It was truly my time of testing. I view it as my emergence from my own desert.

Cathy M

April 1, 2022

Exodus 2:1-22 – Story of Moses from reeds to marriage to Zipporah. Moses as a young man was a tough guy.

1 Corinthians 12:27-13:3 – One of Paul's best passages on Love & Diversity

Mark 9:2-13 – This is the story of the transfiguration of Jesus on the mountain with Peter, James, and John.

A Compass, Diversity & Love

In the wilderness or on the ocean it is all but a necessity to have a compass that helps you focus on the right direction to take on your journey. A compass takes a tiny signal and translates that signal into a guiding direction. A magnetic compass takes Earth's very weak magnetic field and moves a pointer towards North. In the modern world there are many types of compasses for a journey from the simple magnetic compass to fancy electronic sextants, radar, and various Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) devices. All these devices help the traveler make better decisions on which way to choose. However, they are all meaningless if ignored, as we saw in 2007 when the Hanjin cargo ship struck the Bay Bridge. So having a compass and following it are two entirely different things.

All of these passages are about "living" person-compasses (Elijah, Moses, disciples, and Jesus) that were given to people over the ages by God. Each of these "person-compasses" pointed an important direction to the people receiving that person as a "compass" to chart their direction. It is important to note that following a compass is no easy task. I think that God recognizes this. And just as technology has evolved the terrestrial compass from simple star gazing to advanced techniques, so too God has sent a plethora of living-compasses to us to guide us on our way in life.

As Christians we too have been given a compass -- at baptism. The primary compass we have is the example of Jesus. Yet God continues to give us even more compasses than Jesus. The message they deliver makes current and relevant today that distant Jesus signal for someone who would not otherwise get the direction signal for their life. This diversity of channels delivering the message today reaches people who might otherwise not get it any other way. Perhaps you are a living-compass to someone whom you barely know, or even not at all. What Paul indicates is that while there are many "skill-sets" to bring out the Christ in us, the key ingredient is Love -- from the most exulted to the lowest.

So, to each of us in need of a compass, or in being a compass, we need to first find Love. It is in learning how to love that we can read a compass for our own life and be a compass for others.

Jim C

Saturday, April 2, 2022

Exodus 2: 23-3: 15(NRSV)

1 Corinthians 13: 1-13 (NRSV)

Mark 9: 14-29 (NRSV)

I picked my husband's birthday as my date and how serendipitous the LOVE passage. It's so much more than a part of a wedding ceremony. It simply states that nothing we have in this world means anything without love.

Why is it so difficult for us to accomplish this? In our current climate we are witnessing everything opposite. Hate is winning over love.

When the Apostle Paul wrote this letter to the Corinthians, he was describing this love in every relationship we have. Church, home, work, play...neighbor, family, enemy. Simply, put the needs of others before your own.

The hypocrisy we are witnessing today is disturbing. Social media has lifted the mask and given people an "open mike" platform to say anything they want with literally no consequences. I have to believe that in a face-to-face confrontation most people would never say what they put on Facebook and Twitter.

In my own life I am guilty of saying things that are hurtful and unkind. I have gotten better, but it is difficult not to jump into the fight.

On a more positive note, there are wonderful stories of unconditional love people show to others. For example, the housing of Afghan families fleeing their home. I can't even imagine coming to a country where you know no one, have nothing and find people opening their homes and inviting you to be a part of their family.

Families that have lost their homes to tornados and fires are finding communities opening their doors and wallets to ease the pain and loss.

Even in our community of St. Timothy's the generosity and compassion for people in our own backyard is wonderful. Just something simple as buying food for the pantry makes a difference.

Paul sums it up: Love never fails. Christians may fail to love, but God's kind of love will always be effective. Put others before yourself because the greatest of all God's gifts is love.

Rena W

April 4, 2022

Old Testament: Exodus 4: 10-31

The passage from the Old Testament is a beautiful reminder that God gave humanity varying abilities of speech. Some may be “slow of speech” or “slow of tongue,” and others are great orators giving hope and positive energy to listeners. The Lord said to Moses, “Who gives speech to mortals? Who makes them mute or deaf, seeing or blind? . . . Now go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you are to speak.” Because Moses was reluctant, God gave “all the words of the Lord” and “performed signs in the sight of the people” to help Aaron convince the people to believe. Through Aaron, they saw that God was listening to the Israelites, and they worshipped Him. The power of speech is given to all of us believers in the Lord to improve life around us: to soothe the widow’s loss and the patient’s pain, comfort the crying child, offer loving comments to those who are lonely, to greet and get to know your neighbors and so much more. One’s speech can also hurt deeply, and the person who has been hurt should call out the wrongdoing. Speech connects us all for the better or for the worse, and it should bring the best of life’s graces to the people around us.

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 14: 1-19

This reading promotes the power of speech. “Pursue love and strive for the spiritual gifts,” especially “that you may prophesy.” The reading emphasizes prophesy over speaking in tongues because it comes directly from the speaker’s mind. “If in a tongue you utter speech that is not intelligible, how will anyone know what is being said?” much like a bugle that gives an indistinct sound so that “who will get ready for battle?” Paul says, “In church, I would rather speak five words with my mind, in order to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue.” He knew he would then enlighten people to action by words and concepts they could understand. This reminds me of a sermon that resonated with me. The visiting priest came from a farming community where planting and fostering growth was a constant concern. He spoke in such a compelling way about the miracle of the seed and the “magic” that it undergoes on its way to harvest. Though I don’t remember all the words, the awe it engendered in me has never left me. He was not quoting agriculture experts (which can seem like speaking in tongues) but relaying what was in his mind. May we all be able to tell others about our spiritual beliefs with the power of bringing it to their understanding.

Gospel: Mark 9: 30-41

In this Gospel, Jesus was giving his disciples an important message, that he, the Son of Man, would be betrayed into human hands, that they would kill him, and he would rise again after three days. But the disciples were busy arguing among themselves about who was the greatest. Jesus proceeded to explain his divinity by saying that “whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all.” He gave all persons equal status in the eyes of the Lord by saying, “Whoever welcomes a child, welcomes me.” This is crucial to our understanding of Christianity and its intended effect on the human race; yet we struggle to make that an everyday occurrence, even though many of us have professed to being Christians for a very long time. During Covid, most of us became annoyed at other people for various reasons, which proves that it is very difficult to behave as a good Christian should behave. May we continue to try.

Dee G

April 5, 2022

Exodus 5:1 – 6:1

1 Corinthians 14: 20-33, 39-40

Mark 9:42-50

I always forget about this part of the Moses story. Moses goes to the Pharaoh to ask, "Let my people go." Of course. Pharaoh gets mad. In this section, he tells his overseers to make the slaves continue to produce the same number of bricks every day, but now they also must gather the straw required to make the bricks, which was previously provided. There is NO WAY that they can get that much work done. Pharaoh is setting them up to lose.

Have you ever been set up to lose? Did your boss insist that a project or report get finished in such a short time that you had to work all weekend with no extra pay? How did that make you feel? Probably the same as the Israelites. You were probably mad at your boss; they were mad at Moses. They groused at Moses; Moses groused at the Lord. And God said, "No worries, all will be well. We'll just send a bunch of plagues, and you'll be on your way." As we know, they continued to complain every time something went wrong for the next forty years. And Moses complained to God, and God continued to help them out.

How do we break that cycle of griping? Griping is a sin because it turns us away from God's way of living. In today's reading of Mark, Jesus tells us that if your foot causes you to stumble, you should cut it off. If your eye causes you to stumble, rip it out. No one should be a stumbling block for any of God's followers.

Pretty harsh words. No wonder we don't get many sermons on this section of Mark. But what I believe we are being told is, "Help each other on the journey. Don't gripe all day because you make the people who love you the most turn away from you. Stay positive and encourage your fellow travelers on the journey of life. Practice loving those around you, especially those whom you feel deserve it the least."

I suggest that we spend the rest of Lent practicing Love each day. Don't gripe, and don't punish the gripers. Love those below you, and love those above you. Try to make a person's day easier with a kind word or deed. Because, as Jesus taught us, "God is love."

Helen C

Wednesday, April 6, 2022

Exodus 7: 8-24 (NRSV)

2 Corinthians 2:14-36 (NRSV)

Mark 10: 1-16 (NRSV)

These words are simple and comforting. They are, at the same time, clear, powerful and commanding. When we are engaged in conversation with another person---whether at home, at work, in the grocery store or at St. Timothy's---we are directed, commanded to be persons of sincerity. We must be honest and genuine, free from pretense, deceit or hypocrisy. This really says we must mean everything we promise and not expect to be rewarded. In so doing, we build trusting relationships, and we are drawn closer to God.

From the day John and I first entered the doors of St. Timothy's 27 years ago, this has been a place where I have experienced such sincerity. A bond of trust has drawn us into close friendships. From Foyer Group dinners and Vestry retreats to serving as a LEM and a LEV, I have felt the bond of sincerity. While serving as Chair of the Endowment Committee, I have felt the bond of sincerity. During the wine tastings and dinners we hosted for many years as part of Fruits of the Harvest, we have felt the bond of sincerity.

Two years ago, when our son died unexpectedly, the comforting, sincere expressions of love from St. Timothy's clergy and parishioners touched our hearts.

We have worshiped via You Tube and joined Coffee Hours via Zoom during the past couple of years. Even so, we feel the connection and the bond of sincere words.

Lent is a great time to reach out to each other. Every day, I am phoning another parishioner---and Christ is there with us in a bond of sincerity.

Sally J

April 7, 2022

OLD TESTAMENT Exodus 7:25-8:19

EPISTLE 2 Corinthians 3:7-18

GOSPEL Mark 10:17-31

Each of today's readings speaks to change, difficult change. Out with the old and in with the new in a progression of increasing human awareness of the Kingdom of God. Out with the authority of Pharaoh who could not accept the power and influence and love of the Jewish God. Out with what since ancient time was the glory, the awe and wonder of God's law (the law handed down to Moses), "chiseled in letters on stone tablets." And, out with what had come to be the "ministry of condemnation" and the "ministry of death" (2 Cor 3:7). This was a part of Jewish culture (and early Christian culture) in the apostles' time when failure to adhere to the law strictly was punished severely, and when only Jews were permitted to worship in the temple.

In Mark, does not the man seeking eternal life fall into the very trap that Paul identifies in 2 Cor 3:14, "to this very day, when the law of Moses is read, a veil lies over their minds"? This man, with whom many of us may identify closely, knows the law and has kept to it. Yet, marking the change that Jesus is now teaching, the man's obedience to the law alone is not sufficient.

And how hard is it for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God? The disciples were perplexed by Jesus' answer, and are we not? Though we don't use the same vocabulary, asking how to inherit eternal life as we pray, do we at least wonder what it means for each of us to be obedient to God's will, hedging our bets in case there really is a hell? In this passage of Mark, the Bible is truly a living document because the words and the challenges it poses to our being are so contemporary.

During Lent, let all of us, with unveiled faces, seek the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; as this comes from the Lord, the Spirit. Out with the old and in with the new; Come, Spirit, come.

Spencer and Rena F

April 8, 2022

Exodus 9:13-35 – 7th Warning -Hail. Pharaoh agrees & recants to Moses, like a politician.

2 Corinthians 4:1-12 – Treasure in clay jars.

Mark 10:32-45 –the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.

If our Message is obscure to anyone, it's not because we're holding back in any way. No, it's because these other people are looking or going the wrong way and refuse to give it serious attention... It started when God said, "Light up the darkness!" and our lives filled up with light as we saw and understood God in the face of Christ, all bright and beautiful. If you only look at us, you might well miss the brightness. We carry this precious Message around in the unadorned clay pots of our ordinary lives. That's to prevent anyone from confusing God's incomparable power with us. As it is, there's not much chance of that. You know for yourselves that we're not much to look at. We've been surrounded and battered by troubles, but we're not demoralized; we're not sure what to do, but we know that God knows what to do; we've been spiritually terrorized, but God hasn't left our side; we've been thrown down, but we haven't broken.

--Portions of 2 Corinthians 4:1-12 MSG

What Are We to Do Now?

Often, I don't understand what is written in the Bible. I got this day as a bonus day as Helen was short of writers. I needed to read *The Message* to recast the NRSV translation to help me understand what being said. *The Message* is not a translation of the Bible but an interpretation of the more scholarly translations from the original ancient languages. Often the original ancient symbolism has changed in meaning and power in more contemporary times. I was drawn to the "clay jars" reference. Treasure in clay jars in the NRSV version just didn't ring in my mind well, but left me wondering about it. *The Message* interpretation helped me, and perhaps you as well.

These two years of pandemic time have been filled with tragedy, fear, anger, and mostly separation. We humans do not react well to these emotions; we really like being the social animals that we are. Certainly, there has been a major "behavioral modification" in many individuals and in whole segments of the world population. As on so many occasions in the Bible, we are called upon to "fear not" in difficult times. Paul reminds the Corinthians (and us) that we have a special gift from God in knowing Jesus to use in these times.

It would be interesting data to have a "thermometer" type instrument to measure negative emotions in individuals and populations before the pandemic and now. Yet, we as Christians have received a greater power to overcome these negative times. That is the knowledge and comfort of knowing the teachings of Jesus about God in our lives. This is a gift from God to us. No doubt you have received it in some degree, but perhaps have set it aside and forgotten it, given the other more dazzling and captivating experiences impinging upon your consciousness from modern media. Yet it is still there, and no person or thing or experience that can separate you from God. I encourage you to shine up that gift and put it on top of your own clay jar.

A physical clay jar is a simple container not used as much today, it is not tightly sealed and easily opened. Our clay jar is the cookie jar adorning the kitchen counter. I can't remember how long we have had it; it is just there as place for quick loving treats. Like that jar of treats, you carry that God gift quietly yet openly, not in a safe deposit box but in the openness of your life. You are the clay jar! Your call is to be that clay jar open to others and filled with the treats of God's gift to those around you.

Jim C

April 9, 2022

Exodus 10:21-11:8
2 Corinthians 4:13-18
Mark 10:46-52

Have you noticed there are people who find it easy to ask for help when they find themselves in difficult situations? There are other people who have problems asking others for help.

The story of Jesus healing the blind beggar reminds me of Jesus' love and compassion for the lowliest and most helpless of persons. Like all of us, the beggar knew of Jesus, and had three options of action as we all have. We can stay silent. With others we can give a cheer or, we can open our lips and say something. The blind man did not stay silent. He did not just give a "hurrah!" with others for Jesus. He didn't say a few pleasantries and move on. No! The beggar knew that he had a desperate need. He had heard about Jesus, perhaps from one of his friends, or from a passerby as he sat by the roadside begging and feeling isolated. He knew that he was helpless, but he did have hope. In desperation, he reached out to Jesus and asked him to have mercy on him. Jesus, traveling to Jerusalem for the last time with much on his mind, without any hesitation stopped and asked the man "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man answered, "I want to see again." Jesus said, "Go! Your faith has made you well." Because the beggar opened his mouth and asked Jesus to heal him, his life was changed forever. The hope within him had borne fruit. He could now share with others what Jesus had done for him and that Jesus could change their lives too.

I am a little stoic when I need help. I don't open my mouth and ask for help. Perhaps I think that through some sort of telepathy or osmosis or even my body language, somehow friends and family will know my needs. It may be that if I don't articulate my need I am not committed to it and don't really need it. It is a want and not a need. I have always been a hopeful person and when I do articulate my needs, things happen. As I pray for things to happen, in the global world, the healing of my friends and my own needs, I have boundless hope that God's Holy Spirit will not work only through others but also through me, opening my lips and moving me into action. In my life it is God in Christ in the Holy Eucharist that empowers me, keeping this law of love.

Father Maurice T

April 11, 2022

Old Testament - Lamentations 1: 1-2

Epistle - 2 Corinthians 1: 1-7

Mark 11: 12-25

Jesus cursing a poor fig tree, because there were no figs for him to eat! That seems out of character and to make no sense literally, (I should be cursing the 20 year old lemon tree in my garden that only produces about 6 lemons a year) and then I remembered that in the Old Testament the fig tree was a common symbol for Israel and their spiritual standing with God. So, this seems to be a parable, that the disciples would have understood, about Jesus's judgement on Israel. He looks for evidence of fruit, (sincere faith in God), has found nothing and curses it.

The fig tree looked alive from a distance, as I am sure the Temple did as he approached. Jesus goes next to the Temple in Jerusalem with all its grandeur and activity and I think he is disgusted that there seems to be no devoted worship (fruit of the spirit)-- only commerce and money changers. "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations, but you have made it a den of robbers". I am sure in our own time Jesus would find churches established in his name that are also functioning opposite to the founding mission. I think I see that frequently on the TV.

Passing the fig tree again, they find it "withered away to its roots" and Jesus uses this to teach the disciples and us about a fruitful life with God. "Have faith in God....So I tell you, whatever you ask for it prayer, believe you have received it". We are told to live a life of faith that God is with us and there will be nothing we cannot do if we let God be our guide. Scary stuff for me stepping out of the norms of society and doing something about the injustice I see in society. I think of one of my heroes, the late Desmond Tutu and his abiding faith that his mission was God's will. He was courageous, took many personal chances, seemed not to be afraid when he must have been, and radiated peace and confidence in God. He moved one "mountain" and often encountered another, but seemed to remain confident and, as Jesus tells us, with God it happens - the apartheid system was ended. I believe that in these verses, Jesus invites me to pray with confidence that everything is possible with the understanding that the outcome of my prayers will always be with God. I can ask God for healings for friends, a more just society and survival of the planet, but ultimately I must trust God's wisdom and timing.

I often ask myself, for me, what is in my way of moving mountains? Is it my lack of courage and willingness to step outside the box, doubts and lack of faith, or am I settling for the safe and not daring to ask God for my "mountain" or even a "foothill." A major fear is being the fig tree and just withering away, but the courage to step out and speak out is also frightening.

Alison H

Tuesday, April 12, 2022

Lamentations 1:17-22

2 Corinthians 1:8-22

Mark 11:27-33

Again they came to Jerusalem. As he was walking in the temple, the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders came to him and said, "By what authority are you doing these things? Who gave you this authority to do them?" Jesus said to them, "I will ask you one question: answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin? Answer me." They argued with one another, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say, 'Why then did you not believe him.' But shall we say, 'Of human origin'? ... they were afraid of the crowd, for all regarded John as truly a prophet. So, they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And Jesus said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things."

Jesus has begun his ministry, traveling with his disciples, teaching, healing, and generally stirring up trouble. When he comes to Jerusalem and enters the temple, he is challenged by the folks in charge, who are not happy with him. They want to know by what authority he is doing these things. Jesus answers their question with a question, thereby avoiding the trap they are setting for him. Afraid of the crowd, they choose not to answer Jesus' question.

It is easy to read this gospel passage from Mark and feel disdain for the temple leaders because they don't stand up and speak their truth. But I have to ask myself: How many times have I not directly and honestly answered a difficult question? How many times have I not explicitly told a lie, but have answered a difficult question with a calculatedly noncommittal or evasive response? How many times have I not challenged authority when I see injustice?

Jesus speaks on his own authority. My baptismal covenant is my authority.

I pray every day that I find the strength and courage to seek and serve Christ in ALL persons, to love ALL my neighbors, and to strive for justice and peace among ALL people, respecting the dignity of EVERY human being.

So much easier said than done.

Wishing all of you a blessed Lent.

Rev. Deacon Patricia P

April 13, 2022

Isaiah. 50:4-9a

Hebrews 12:1-3

John 13:21-32

My Christian path has had many twists and turns. When I was little my family attended a very strict Episcopal church. Every time I went to church, I was afraid that I would do something wrong. This experience confused me because I thought God loved us. Why wasn't the church a more welcoming place?

In junior high and high school, I did not go to church. My parents ran the concessions (rides, food stands, etc.) at the Oakland Zoo and I worked with them every weekend and school breaks. In college, I felt like something was missing. I started attending a church near my apartment and found peace and kindness at the church.

After college I, again, worked full-time with my parents at the Zoo. Something was missing in my life. I went back to church and was a regular at the 7:30am Sunday service. The Pastor helped me overcome my guilt and feelings that I am not worthy of God's love. God had a path for me, and I just had to open my heart and my mind. I realized that God always loves me, no matter what mistakes I might make.

Isaiah touched me: "The Lord GOD has given me the tongue of a teacher, that I may know how to sustain the weary with a word." At my core I strive to be kind—to everyone. God gives me strength and a voice to help others even if it is only a kind word to the Safeway checker or a smile as I pass a stranger. I have asked God to be in my life and show me my path. He has guided me to people who needed kindness and support. I have days when I doubt myself and think I have let God down. But I cannot let God down. He is always with me and loves me despite my human frailties.

Linda C

April 14, 2022 Maundy Thursday

Exodus 12: 1-4, 11-14
Psalm 116:1, 10-17
1 Corinthians 11:23-26
John 13:1-17, 31b-35

The four scripture readings are crucial to our understanding of our faith as Christians.

The reading from the Book of Exodus describes the “Passover of the Lord.” This is the origin of the Jewish Passover which our Jewish friends celebrate seriously at their annual Passover meal. This is a thanksgiving and celebration to God meant to continue through all generations observing it as a perpetual remembrance. All the food and symbols are of the Jews’ escape from slavery, remembering especially the last night’s events before their freedom. At every succeeding Passover, every Jew is reminded that they too were brought out of slavery.

Historically the Epistle (letter) reading is from St. Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, the earliest letter that we know about. Paul’s letters were written before any of the gospel books in the Bible. The meaning of the Holy Eucharist by St. Paul is the earliest written meaning extant. Paul wrote Jesus’s words, “This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” Usually, I understand the meaning of remembrance as remembering: words; acts, or intentions that will make them come alive, real, within me, i.e. within my mind, heart and spirit bringing a person to me living. In the Holy Eucharist or Holy Communion by remembrance we are brought in communion with Christ.

Just before the Jews were preparing for their Passover, Jesus had his “Last Supper” with his disciples, as described in the Corinthians passage. Then, Surprise! Jesus began to wash their feet. In biblical times when you visited someone’s home after walking dusty roads, a slave would wash and refresh your feet before visiting with your hosts. Jesus was about to wash Peter’s feet when Peter realized that Jesus was acting like a slave. Peter, who earlier had said, “You are the Christ” and “You will never wash my feet.’ After washing the feet of all the disciples, Jesus said he was their example and gave them a new commandment: “Everyone will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another.”

After the three readings, my response to Psalm 116:10 is: “How shall I repay the Lord for all the good things he has done for me?” I will always love others without exception as God in Christ.

Father Maurice T

April 15, 2022

Isaiah 52:13-53:12 Hebrews 10:16-25 John 18:1-19:42 Psalm 22

Good Friday is a long day. The morning stretches toward noon and the hours between 12 and 3 lengthen whether we are in church, fasting, praying, walking the labyrinth, or simply watching the hours run out.

This year it is the words “it is finished” that linger in my prayer.

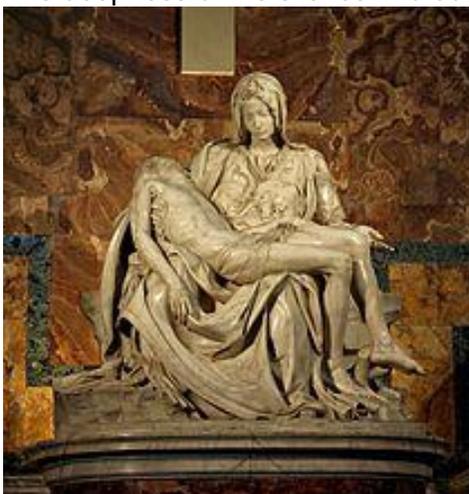
What is finished? Is it the betrayal, pain, or shame of hanging on a cross? What is finished? Is it the precious gift of life given to a man who loved and shared God’s power and love with the broken-hearted, with me? Is it that this is an ending and now there is a beginning?

This year I notice that it is not finished. Beloved friends and family gather to take the body of Jesus off the cross and lay it in a resting place. The mockery of people standing by is silenced by death which comes to us all. Jesus, who spoke of God’s love so often, of abiding in the Love of his Father, is silent. Love surrounds him still, but it is held by the deep silence and soul piercing lament of grief of family and friends.

As we have been gripped by fear, isolation, loneliness and even bravado during this pandemic, we have wanted to cry out, “it is finished”—and still--it is not finished. Life is only changed, as it is always changing.

On this Good Friday, I wonder if our longing to leave behind the ugly comments, the betrayal of systemic racism and injustice, sickness, and limits on our travel, education and social time might point a way forward as resurrection people. Today I desire to reflect on something in my life that limits my living more deeply the love and the joy that God desires for me and for us all.

To say “it is finished” could mean embracing the people around me, all the people, with new eyes. Seeing the wounded and stranded, who are also my family, may enable me to help roll away the stone of imprisonment, which imprisons us all. Today in the silence we hear the cries of the hurting, the grieving, and the lost. We hear the cry of loving and being loved. With a breath, we may be given the power to act in love in a way we could not imagine. Today we pause, gathering the deepness of the silence into our hearts.



Tomorrow we wait. We lament; we continue, if we allow ourselves, to grieve for what is lost and what cannot be, freeing us to see where we are—this moment, now. We are Easter people. First, we walk the betrayal and loss of Good Friday, knowing ourselves a little better, opening our heart a little more deeply into this particular moment of our lives with all its everyday heartaches and joys on the sidewalks of our lives. We hope.

God has not forsaken us, although it feels that way in the darkness of dying to new life. Today it is Good Friday. There is time enough to turn toward the light of Easter.

Michelangelo's Pietà, St. Peter's

Pastor Susan+

April 16, 2022
Holy Saturday

Job 14:1-14

Lamentations 3:1-9, 19-24

1 Peter 4:1-8

Matthew 27:57-66

John 19:38-42

“...The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. “The LORD is my portion,” says my soul, “therefore I will hope in him.”

The passage from Lamentations jumped out and soothed my soul. Jeremiah, the author of Lamentations, describes the pain and sorrow that have consumed him. This might be likened to the modern-day pity party that most of us have when we are overwhelmed with life’s events. It is important to acknowledge that these feelings are real, deep, and there may not necessarily be a simple fix.

I believe that we have some choices in how to manage these feelings. We can’t always make the events go away as if they didn’t happen. They did and ARE a part of us. What I tend to try to do is find something good somewhere, even if it doesn’t relate to the specific issue at hand. For me, I can find hope in a hummingbird finding nectar in my plants, or a glorious sunrise, sunset, or full moon. I get excited when the camelias start blooming. I share these little things with my husband and for a moment we can escape the challenges we may be having. Having even this small respite can give me renewal to continue to tackle the situation in front of me.

I also want to put a disclaimer in ...a hummingbird won’t necessarily fix the deep pain and sorrow we all feel. There are times when we need to do more than just look at a camelia. We may need to take action to manage the situation. But if we approach the issue with hope, we can open ourselves up to the possibility of finding something good in an otherwise difficult predicament. For example, I have met some wonderful people as a result of challenging situations, and some are now life-long friends.

1 Peter gives a wonderful piece of advice “Above all, maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins”. When we are overwhelmed, it is easy to feel unworthy, unloved, and incapable of giving love. Even in our brokenness, if we can love even a little, then hope can be a part of how we tackle life’s challenges.

Blessings,

Cathy H

LENT, HOLY WEEK AND EASTER

Ash Wednesday, March 2nd

12 noon (on-campus only, no music)

7pm (hybrid with music)

In-person imposition of Ashes at both services

Wednesday Formation - March 9th, 16th, 23rd

5pm Kahoot family fun (hybrid)

Parents and children bring your phones to church. We will have “kahoot” based bible games, a hands-on craft, and a light snack.

6:30pm

Adult Formation and Storytelling

Lenten Sunday School - March 20th, 27th & April 1st

10-10:30am, concurrent with 10am worship

Family Sunday Movie Day, March 27th

3-5pm, Encanto movie in church, light snacks, and Lenten activity

Friday Stations of the cross - March 4th, 11th, 18th, 25th, April 1st, 8th

12 noon, start on labyrinth

MLK Remembrance, Monday April 4th

6pm, assassination remembrance service, location TBD

Palm Sunday, April 10th

8am (campus-only) and 10am (hybrid) - palms o’ plenty

Maundy Thursday, April 14th

7pm (hybrid) with hand washing

Good Friday worship, April 15th

12 noon (hybrid no music) and 7pm (campus-only with music)

Good Friday stations of the cross, April 15th

1pm, start on labyrinth

Easter Vigil, April 16th

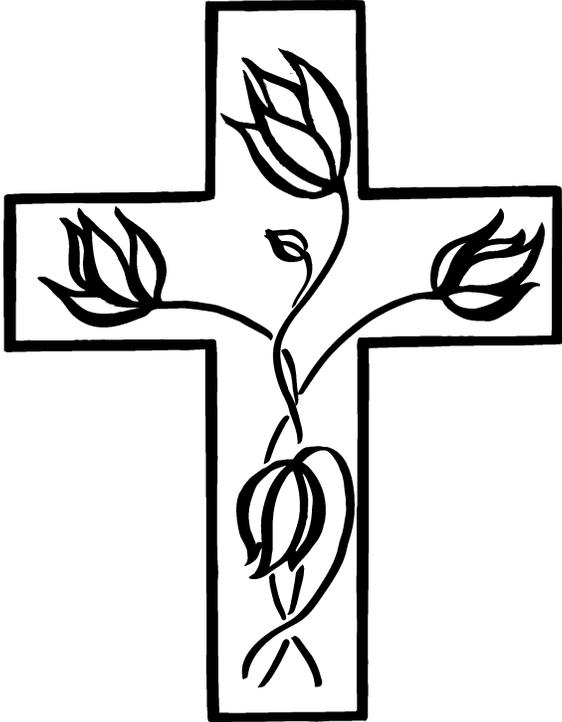
8pm (hybrid with music), ring your bells and set fires

Easter Sunday, April 17th

8am (campus-only) and 10am (hybrid)

Digital, on-campus family scavenger hunt with prizes and hospitality after worship

Note: In the schedule, whenever “hybrid” is noted that means livestream simultaneous with in-person worship.



Contact US

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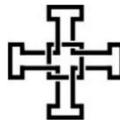
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