

Lenten Lectionary



2024

***St. Timothy's Church
1550 Diablo Road
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Introduction 2024

Good morning, fellow Pilgrims on the Lenten journey. I am writing this on Monday of Holy Week, 2023, the earliest I ever thought ahead for our Lenten Lectionary. I woke up this morning looking forward to reading our last contribution of the year. I lay in bed thinking about how COVID had affected the path of our Lenten meditations. We have folks writing for us from Mexico and Nevada City, where they have moved. I know folks in Reno, Nevada City, Oregon, South Carolina, and Livermore, who can't personally attend St. Tim's but request their copies of the Lectionary to help them keep their faithful Lent. By having our 10:00 service online each week, we have spread the Gospel much farther than we could do in person. God has a sneaky way of making good out of every bad situation if we only look for Him.

So where is our path forward? I have no clue, but I know that God is in the midst of us.

Now, in 2024, I read the words I wrote a year ago, and am amazed and delighted that God is still working in so many wonderful ways at St. Tim's and in our personal lives. We just got back from an overnight with our Warm Winter Nights. Getting to know our guests one-on-one causes me to thank God for their cheerfulness and love for each other in the face of terrible economic hardship. The stories of our families both break our hearts and lift them up, because of their faith and resilience.

As you prepare for Lent, think of what you can do to draw closer to God. It can be a mindful meditation each day, a quiet walk alone or with loved ones, or an act of kindness. Be mindful of how God is using YOU to work His purpose out.

Lenten blessings,
Helen Coleman

Thursday, February 15, 2025

Habakkuk 3:1-18
Philippians 3:12-21
John 17: 1-8

In the context of this passage, Jesus prays for glorification, and intercedes for ALL people that they receive the eternal life God has promised them. Jesus has finished the work that God has given him to do, and now prays to be reunited and restored to the glorified presence within the Holy Trinity. Humanity is God's creation and Jesus came to earth to show humankind that they are just that, human, who are born with sin; but the Father forgives us when we falter. As believers in Jesus, we have received the truth in our belief, and have hope in the promise of everlasting life.

One year ago, December 29, 2022, I lost my brother to cancer. I think of him when I read this passage...wondering if he knew his time was near. His death rocked our family as it was unexpected. He wasn't a religious man. He didn't go to church. I don't know if he prayed. I don't know where his state of mind was in the minutes before his heart stopped. He was alone when he died. Did he have time to ask God for forgiveness for the faults in his life? If he didn't, was he still welcomed into Jesus's arms?

As Christians, we believe that our loved ones will be waiting for us when our time comes. This is what this passage tells us. While we miss him terribly, I find peace in this. This is what our faith teaches us and for that I am forever grateful.

Rena Waterson

Friday, February 16, 2024

Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32

Philippians 4:1-9

John 17:9-19

The Gospel of today is part of the scripture known as Jesus's prayer. It is the last prayer he says together with the disciples at their last supper. It is a heartfelt and meaningful prayer that comes at the end of their time together. This section of John 17 is the prayer he says for the disciples. Jesus knows that when he is gone, they will now go out into a world that will be difficult and dangerous for them to keep speaking his word. Like Jesus has done, they will speak of things that upset the natural order of the time. He uses strong language of hate and evil in describing what they will face. It is a powerful prayer as it sends them forth to continue the mission to speak in God's name, as this is the beginning and not the end of their ministry.

This scripture says to me that Jesus knew his time on Earth was ending and it was going to be a difficult road ahead for the disciples of the new church of Christ. It is never easy to speak up against the status quo. It is much harder to say things that you know will likely lead to a difficult time for you as an individual, as it was going to be for the disciples. We all find it easier to avoid that difficult conversation. However, if we avoid what is difficult to discuss, how will we ever resolve problems? It does not mean we have to confront others to just make our point. We need to look for ways to show others a better path or a possible common ground. Jesus knew the strength of his message, but he knew that he needed to demonstrate the message through his actions and through the actions of his believers. We can follow that message by living a life that demonstrates our actions even more than our words.

If you have few minutes, I encourage you to read all of John 17 as it is a meaningful prayer in the words of Jesus as he confronts his final days.

Jim Pray

Saturday, February 17, 2024

Ezekiel 39: 21-29

Philippians 4: 10-20

John 17: 20-26

I have taken the letter from Paul to the Philippians as listed, and pulled out some sentences that said specifically his words that I chose to write about.

“You were concerned for me but had no opportunity to show it. Not that I am referring to being in need, for I have learned to be content with whatever I have. I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being well fed and of going hungry, of having plenty, and of being in need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. Not that I seek (your) gift, but I seek the profit that accumulates to your account.”

I recently was online and came across a full-length Italian movie from about twenty years ago. It was a beautifully produced movie about Paul the Apostle. It showed all the parts of his life, from the time when he was aggressively persecuting early-day Christians, through his blinding, conversion and baptism, and then his traveling abroad to spread The Word. His words in that letter brought to mind the life of someone very close to me who had a life-changing moment such as he had.

She spent the first part of her life in addiction, all the while working very hard to establish her own business. She became very well off, but at a very low point, she had a moment of deep self-evaluation, and saw that she needed to drastically change her life. She has succeeded for decades to stay un-addicted, one hard day at a time.

A few years ago when the American financial picture declined, she lost a significant portion of what she had worked so hard to achieve. She said to me with a big smile, "I have been poor and I have been rich. I know how to be poor." This echoes the words of Paul in his letter to the Philippians.

This woman gave away much of what she earned to others during her well-off years. She continues to do so even in her current reduced situation. She reads each morning from spiritual writings before she starts her day. Then she goes out and volunteers with many different groups supporting the less fortunate, and is a counselor to women seeking to escape addictions. She truly lives Paul's words: "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." Her love for others is unwavering and full of joy.

She does not think of herself as exceptionally "good," but her sense of obligation to others is unending. I hold her as a true and shining example of how it is to be a Christian in this, or any time. There is definitely a "profit" in her account due to her life of serving others.

Patty Alexanderson

Monday, February 19, 2024

Genesis 37:1-11

1 Corinthians 1:1-19

Mark 1:1-13

Old Testament Joseph was a person who was unique and special. He was chosen by God for the purpose of divine providence. The result of the “special” treatment as well as what he experienced through his dreams did not sit well with his father and his brothers. The fact that Joseph received from his father a “coat of many colors” to symbolize his favored status did not serve any peaceful acceptance from his brothers, of Joseph’s ultimate destiny, as jealousy and envy was rampant by the siblings.

I am thinking about a vision of a beloved leader. A leader who was accepted by most of the population but not beloved by others. This leader, who extends a helping hand by various means and commitments, and as a result, remains unappreciated and unliked by a sizable portion of the population. He exists as a leader who is both loved, respected, and admired on one hand and disliked and envied by people who were jealous of his righteousness and sincerity.

Epistle: In Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, Paul offers a blessing of grace and peace and reminds the readers of their receipt of Spiritual gifts of enrichment, speech, and knowledge. Additionally, Paul reminds them of the positive aspects of their faith as they await the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul also addresses the problems of division, including their penchant for quarrelling. Reflecting the importance of unity in Christ and the power of the message of the cross, Paul makes it clear that the message of the cross is the power of God for salvation.

The comparison for me provides an example of faith. Paul explains what “little faith” looks like, compared to “full, unquestioning and unconditional faith.” The latter is the choice to live by.

Gospel: Not unlike Mark’s message, which quoted Isaiah and Malachi prophesying the coming good news and the anticipation of the coming Messiah, I find myself pondering that event occurring in our time. One recurring theme, for me, is who will be the modern-day “John the Baptist”? What person or other-worldly mass-communication source will serve as the herald of the good news of God’s redemption? Will we witness the descent of a dove to confirm the person who is to be the Messiah? Will those who believe achieve peace and victory over temptation? The good news is... this too shall pass.

Mike Miles

Tuesday, February 20, 2024

Genesis 37:12-24

1 Corinthians 1:20-31

Mark 1:14-28

When I was in high school, my first questions when asked to do something was, "Who is going to be there?" I didn't want to do anything unless my friends were going to be there. As I got older my first question became, "Can I do this?" I was not going to say yes if I felt like I was going to let people down or embarrass myself.

We spend so much of our time and energy trying to figure everything out. We read, watch the news, talk to our friends, even pray, seeking all the answers. Once we understand everything, then our lives will make sense. Once we can reliably predict the outcome of a particular action, or a diagnosis, or the stock market, we will know what to do.

In the gospel passage, the disciples don't stop to try to figure things out. Jesus says, "follow me," and they go, leaving their jobs and families and lives. They don't ask, "Who else is going?" or "Can I do it?" They don't do the logical thing, but they respond to Jesus with their whole hearts and lives.

This Lent, I want to wholeheartedly answer "yes" when Jesus calls. Rather than ask myself my old questions, I want my go-to question to be "Is there something about this issue that breaks my heart?" Jesus has the ability to touch our hearts, just as he touched those early disciples. I want to listen to Him and respond "yes!" wholeheartedly without regard to my own capabilities or lack of capacity.

As the epistle reminds us, God chooses what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; He chooses the weak to shame the strong. (vs. 27) If we say yes, he will take care of the rest.

Have a blessed Lent,

Karen Parnell

Wednesday, February 21, 2024

Genesis 37:1-11

1 Corinthians 1:1-19

Mark: 1:1-13

Mark is placing John the Baptist in historical context by quoting Isaiah the prophet—recognizing his role as the messenger of God who prepares the way for Jesus. His particular preaching, lifestyle and commitment led many to follow his admonitions and be baptized, repenting for their sins. Jesus, when baptized by John, was clearly identified by his Father as his beloved son. Jesus was then driven into the wilderness for forty days.

What does this story tell us about our lives today? There is no John or Jesus present on the earth today—in human form. How are they and their faith represented today, and put into practice?

It's us...his followers, who have the mission of bringing the Good News to the world. My interpretation is not that we are to be on the street corner witnessing—although I have done that. I believe that our lives can be a living testament to the power and blessings of God. Our actions are all witness to what we really believe and how one is to live their life faithfully.

Be aware that we are seen as examples of our faith by those around us who are 'unchurched' but who are considering whether faith and the church are for them. Living a committed life can be inspirational to others—and it doesn't require wearing our faith on our sleeve—but living it in authentic ways.

Mike Oliver

Thursday, February 22, 2024

Genesis 39:1-23

1 Corinthians 2:14 - 3:15

Mark 2:1-12

The readings for today all talk about the power of God. In the reading from Genesis, we hear about the fate of Joseph in Egypt after he is sold by his brothers. First, he works for a high government official and rises to be the overseer of the official's affairs and his house. We are told that the official's affairs prospered. Joseph's success is spoiled when the wife of the official attempts unsuccessfully to seduce him and subsequently lies to her husband saying the Joseph tried to seduce her. Joseph is jailed by the official, where he again finds favor with the chief jailer and rises to oversee the prison and the prisoners. Subsequent to today's reading, Joseph interprets the Pharaoh's dreams and again rises to a powerful position. The author(s) of Genesis reiterate multiple times that Joseph's success is due to God's favor.

In Paul's letter to the Corinthians, he chastises them for quarreling and jealousy and dissension between groups who claim to belong to Paul or belong to Apollos. Paul explains that Jesus and God are the source of his and Apollo's teaching and belief and that the Corinthians need to develop their spirituality. He says: "I planted; Apollos watered but God gave the growth." God is the one with the power.

The Gospel story of the paralyzed man brought to the house where Jesus was staying in Capernaum and healed is found in three of the four Gospels – all except John. To me, this argues that the story was so well known in the early Christian community and considered so powerful that it had to be included in the Gospels created by Matthew, Mark, and Luke. All three Gospels state that Jesus tells the officials who questioned his right to forgive sins, that he has that power because of his relationship to their God and his power includes the power to tell the man to get up and walk. Then he proceeds to do just that.

All of today's readings describe situations related to God's power. In the reading from Genesis, Joseph prospers in Egypt despite being sold into slavery, falsely accused by the wife of his master, and thrown into jail. In the Gospel, Jesus asserts to his critics that he can heal the paralyzed man by forgiving his sins because he is the Son of God. Both of those readings include clear demonstrations of POWER.

Paul's letter to the Corinthians is different in that the community is not living together in harmony; they have not developed their spirituality to the point where they understand that they can learn from multiple teachers (Paul and Apollos). I think it is easier to see the power of God when someone prospers despite the challenges thrown in their way (Joseph) or makes a paralyzed man get up off his litter and walk (the healing in Capernaum) than when the community is not relating well, or life is presenting us with challenges. Getting along and being with people we disagree with; I think that involves exercising our training in seeing the good in everyone – not just those we agree with and who share our values. Feeling the presence of God with us when things are not going well in our personal lives and/or in our community is really helped by having a caring village that supports us. Part of what I think makes St. Timothy's special is the community that continually works to help others both inside the community and outside, and support the members in their personal journey. Thank you, God, for this village.

Sally Shea Potts

Friday, February 23, 2024

Genesis 40:1-23

I Corinthians 3: 16-23

Mark 2:23-3:6

1 Corinthians 3:16-23 Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple. Do not deceive yourselves. If you think that you are wise in this age, you should become fools so that you may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their craftiness," and again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile." So let no one boast about human leaders. For all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future--all belong to you, and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.

1 Corinthians 3:16-23 : "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?"

Today, I'm reflecting on what it means that we are God's temple and their Spirit's dwelling place. I find comfort in the idea that if God is choosing me for this purpose, they are looking out for me.

Every year around New Year's, my husband and I talk about our "highs and lows" from the prior year. For me, 2023 was marked by significant health changes and challenges. My end of year highlights included a renewed sense of gratefulness for the opportunity to enjoy physical health, and thankfulness for my family and friends for their support and care. Today's reading reminded me that I would be remiss to not also recognize the sense of peace I experience knowing the Divine is invested in me personally, and acknowledge how that is something that, perhaps unconsciously, contributes to my overall mental wellbeing.

Emily Garcia

Saturday, February 24, 2024

Genesis 41: 1-13 (NRSV)

1 CORINTHIANS 4: 1-7 (NRSV)

Mark 2:23-3:6 (NRSV)

1 Corinthians 4: 4-6: *I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore, do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive commendation from God. I have applied all this to Apollos and myself for your benefit, brothers and sisters, so that you may learn through us the meaning of the saying, "Nothing beyond what is written," so that none of you will be puffed up in favor of one against another.*

This passage tells me that to judge another person, when that is not my role, can be an act of pride. Making decisions and choices are a major part of life and even survival. But Paul reminds us in Corinthians that when we make judgments about others, we must take care.

His message is that we can easily become "puffed up" and feel superior when considering the views of others. Suddenly, pride emerges, and we become judgmental.

For example, do we ever feel "puffed up" when discussing the upcoming election? When noting who decides to get vaccines and who do not? When pondering what is happening at our US borders? And even when comparing who chooses designer boutique and who chooses bargain brands? Do we consider our own preferences better than the choices of others?

I like this prayer by Eldon Degge about the proper time for judgment:

Dear Father, who drives away all the darkness,

Keep me from passing judgment before the proper time, before the Lord comes, for he will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of every person's heart, including mine. And so, everyone will receive appropriate commendation from you.

Let me be concerned about "this day" and "that day."

Let me do my best to serve you "this day" - today, that I may stand before you on "that day" - your day of reckoning!

It is by Jesus' authority and in his name that I offer up this prayer. Amen

Gayle Lombardi

Monday, February 26, 2024

Genesis 41:46-57

1 Corinthians 4:8-21

Mark 3:7-19

Three themes come out of these three readings. It is not obvious how they relate to each other: Joseph storing up grain, St. Paul speaking of the Kingdom of God as weakness, and Jesus appointing apostles who have the authority to cast out demons.

Power is a word you do not hear in a positive light very often. We often sense oppressiveness or manipulation in that word. Yet, love without power is ineffectual, reducing it to something sweet, sentimental, or romantic.

Hmmmmmm. When I was in my twenties, fifty years ago, I thought Christianity was for the good, bourgeoisie people, not for the lost or sinners like me. Yet, I was still on the inside edge of the Church, being a twice a year kid for the holidays and even going to the Episcopal chapel in college but not really understanding much.

The Catholic Michel Quoist says that the good people do not know what sin is. For those who see sin directly either in themselves or in society, power is a word that is required! This leads to the deep problem with love and power. How can you have both? One of my favorite quotes by the theologian Paul Tillich is this: "*Justice without love is unjust.*" I see that society is struggling with this concept today. But for my internal struggles with God fifty years ago, the problem took the form of this: *how I can accept a lovelessness in myself that I cannot close my eyes to?* Tillich notes that the apostle Paul on the road to Damascus in his encounter with Jesus found himself accepted when he was most estranged from God. It would take me many years to begin to be grasped by God's power to accept that which was utterly unacceptable in myself and in the world/society.

Coming to Christ from an interest in Greek thought and Existentialism, I needed a Christ strong enough to overcome estrangement. But isn't it amazing how God decided to do that? *In the vulnerability of the incarnate baby Jesus and that same adult Jesus on the Cross.*

When we seek help with a problem, the love of a friend helps us see clearly. We saw how Joseph understood the need to store grain. St. Paul sends Timothy to the Corinthians to remind them of the ways of Christ Jesus. Jesus appointed apostles to preach the Gospel that cures diseases and heals unclean spirits.

In 1942 during World War II, the wonderful Archbishop of Canterbury, William Temple, wrote this about the issues here: he speaks of a power that increasingly lays hold of men's hearts and wills" and insists "our selfish hearts must be penetrated and then filled by the energy of His love if we are to defend freedom and direct it to fellowship.

That is a powerful Gospel we must proclaim, strong enough in power and gentle enough in love to address both our individual estrangements from God and worldly evils. Amen.

John Gishe

Tuesday, February 27, 2024

OLD TESTAMENT Genesis 42:1-17 – Part of that story of Joseph and his brothers in Egypt getting food.

EPISTLE Corinthians 5:1-8 – Yeast flavors the whole bread – be the good yeast of Christ.

***GOSPEL** Mark 3:19-35 – Jesus is seen as “out of his mind” exemplifying God’s Love.

Jesus was Crazy *

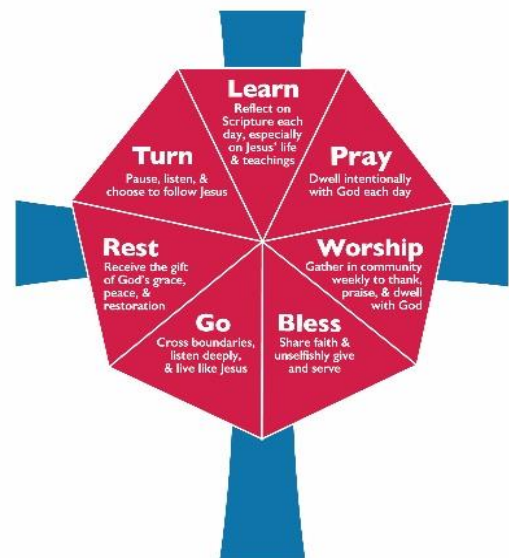
The passage from Mark was used in the first chapter of PB Michael Curry’s book *Crazy Christians*. The scene in my mind is of Jesus returning home after an exhausting but eventful day, healing a man’s hand, annoying the Pharisees on the Sabbath, working crushingly big crowds, appointing the apostles, etc. Then upon returning home, the crowds reappeared, clamoring for more. So loudly and vehemently that Jesus’ household couldn’t even eat. Jesus goes out to the crowd with such exuberance for their needs, that his family and friends suspect that he is crazy.

Crazy is defined as mentally deranged or odd or eccentric behavior. This is how Jesus appeared to his friends and family that evening. God’s call is a crazy one. So much of what Jesus taught just doesn’t make sense. Read the beatitudes in Mathew 5:3-48. This is not what you expect; it is odd and eccentric. Jesus’ teachings are on the surface crazy; up to and including dying on the cross, all are crazy choices. Yet there is a lasting and greater truth here. God is Love. Love is crazy. God is crazy.

As Christians, we profess to be followers of Jesus. Does that mean we are to be crazy too? I think at times we are called to make those crazy choices by prayerfully discerning God’s crazy choice in our everyday decisions. There was an editorial on January 12, 2024 in the Bay Area News Group paper titled, “*Nobody’s fight should be fought alone,*” by David French, a NY Times columnist. While it is ostensibly about cancer, its advice on reaching out to those in emotional need can apply to many human situations. Reaching out to others is a crazy thing to do. But these are the kind of things God would want us to do.

Lent is liturgically a time for self-examination of our relationship with God. This too is a crazy thing to do. Wasn’t Jesus going into the wilderness a crazy thing to do? Among the ways to help ourselves grow in these crazy ways are these Spiritual Practices: Turn, Learn, Pray, Worship, Bless, Go, Rest. There is no particular order to try these practices, but hopefully doing these will help you to become crazy like Jesus.

Jim Coleman



THE WAY OF LOVE
Practices for Jesus-Centered Life

Wednesday, February 28, 2024

Genesis 42:18-28

1 Corinthian 5:9-6:8

Mark 4:1-20

In the first scripture, the brothers of Joseph are remembering their treatment of him, e.g. selling him into slavery, and wondering, "What is this that God has done to us?"

In the second scripture, God is reminding us to focus on the circle of believers, assuring us that He will take care of those who are not believers, "the immoral of the world."

In the third scripture we have the wonderful picture of the sower and the seeds, and seeing all that can prevent the seed from flourishing, e.g., not fertile soil, only a little fertile soil, weeds, and good soil.

In 1980, our family lived in Smoke Rise, New Jersey, in a castle-like home on the top of a hill on two and a half acres. Bob was one of the youngest CFO's of a fortune 500 company based in New York. Our daughters were both class presidents, in 7th and 8th grades respectively. Brady and Sean were adorable twins in the local Catholic school. I was alcoholic. On September 20, 1980, I fell on my knees, letting God know that I needed help.

That was all God needed. The obsession to drink was lifted from me. Without that, I know that I would not have been in recovery.

And God had worked for a long time with me, lovingly.

At Stanford one of my physical therapy internships was at the County Hospital in Alameda, and I worked with alcoholics, reminding me of the deadliness of the disease.

In 1974, at the height of my alcohol and nicotine addictions, I was blessed with Brady and Sean, twins whom God used to heal me.

In 1976, my dad died at the age of 65, from his "functional" alcohol use and pack-a-day cigarette habit.

In Smoke Rise I was surrounded by Godly women, who prayed for me, joining Bible studies to learn about God.

What is this that God has done? Never stop loving us until we learn to love ourselves. And then, to share what God has done, to encourage others still suffering from whatever needs healing in them.

Praise God for his infinite and unconditional love for us.

Peg Miller

Thursday, February 29, 2024

Genesis 42:29-38

1 Corinthians 6:12-20

Mark 4:21-34

Mark 4: 21-34 He said to them, "Is a lamp brought in to be put under the bushel basket, or under the bed, and not on the lampstand? For there is nothing hidden, except to be disclosed; nor is anything secret, except to come to light. Let anyone with ears to hear listen!" And he said to them, "Pay attention to what you hear; the measure you give will be the measure you get, and still more will be given you. For to those who have, more will be given; and from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away." He also said, "The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come." He also said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade." With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear. He did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples."

The two words in the reading from Mark that hooked me were "pay attention". They took me back to 1992 when I was studying and participating in indigenous spiritual practices. At the time I was preparing for my first vision quest. The text below in quotes are from my 1992 journal notes on the instructions from my teacher. If not in quotes, the words are my mine.

"Pay attention." These words from Mark are similar to words that were spoken to me by the elder/teacher guiding my first vision quest in 1992, "*be attentive.*"

"You go out on vision quest with the intention to place yourself to meet Great Spirit. You don't know what form Spirit will take. So, be attentive. Be particularly attentive to small things since big things will make themselves known. *Listen* and observe; the crickets chirping at night, a small bird in the manzanita, the clouds floating overhead."

"Spirit may not show up in a form you recognize as Spirit. So stay detached from expectations of some grand vision. Don't try to force meaning into your experiences, but don't ignore whispers, intuition, or feelings you don't immediately understand."

"Have faith that Spirit is there for anyone."

"Believe what you receive from Spirit. Why should Spirit send you a vision for you to turn around and say, 'I don't believe what just happened ...it must be my imagination.'" I did that on my first vision quest and almost let my doubts prevent me from using the gift given

to me. In essence I put my light under a basket for a time. Mark tells me the more I give, the more I get, and even more will be given. Once I used the gift and practiced greater openness, openness came more easily, and more was received.

When I was first involved in learning indigenous spiritual ways, the practices were separate from my Christian practices. Over time they have become integrated. Spirit is the name that comes most easily when I pray or speak of God. Vision quests are now contemplative practices. Drumming is prayer without words. My teacher's lessons before vision quest still apply to these practices. Be attentive to small things, stay open, have faith Spirit is there even if unseen/unheard, believe, and act on what is received.

"Let anyone with ears to hear ...listen." Mark has the perfect mantra for a vision quest ...or a time of contemplative prayer.

Gloria Rousseau

Friday, March 1, 2024

Genesis 43:1-15
1 Corinthians 7:1-9
Mark 4:35-41

The word that is either implied or stated throughout these scriptures is authority. Several synonyms for authority include power, jurisdiction, command, control, dominance, and the government. In Genesis, authority comes from Joseph. It is a time of severe famine, and having enough food to eat was challenging, if not impossible. To secure more food, full disclosure about the family was needed, along with presents and double the money normally needed. In 1 Corinthians, authority is synonymous with ruling over or having control over. According to Paul, the wife or husband do not have control over their own body, but over his or her spouse's body. And in the gospel, it must be Jesus that can control the wind and sea, for even the wind and sea obey him. When I ask the wind to stop, I do not get the response Jesus did.

Different versions of the Bible send very different messages about the use of power. The passage from Corinthians is a perfect example of this. In the RSV and New Jerusalem Bible, verse 7:4 states that the wife does not rule over her own body, but her husband does; and that the husband does not rule over his own body, but that the wife does. The Message does not even talk about one partner having control over the partner, but in fact, it is the bond of marriage that should be strong enough to handle marital desires. This can and should be a topic for another day. We learned recently at a Safe Church training that a person should be able to consent to being touched. It can be between a husband and wife (again, another topic for another day), family, friends, colleagues, and acquaintances. My husband is a hugger, I am less so. Each of us needs to respect the boundaries others set out for us, even if we do not necessarily agree with it.

So, what about God – does he necessarily respect our boundaries? I think He does. I know I change the boundaries as to how much I let Him touch my life. It can be difficult to give God control over life, especially if it is a difficult situation. I believe that situations out of our control frequently happen. But where God comes in is to see a moment of good within a horrible event. That good may be the people sent to help us, whether immediately or in the long term. It may be a beautiful event of nature. These moments are a tap on my shoulder (I am good with that) to remind me that He is still there and ready to serve.

Cathy Hager

Saturday, March 2, 2024

Genesis 43: 16-34

1 Corinthians 7:10-24

Mark 5:1-20

The gospel Mark 5:1-20 is intriguing to me. Having heard about “**unclean spirits**” all my life, it was interesting to take note of how Jesus dealt with them and, consequently, what that means for my spiritual growth.

“They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes.” This region exists in Israel today (check the map), so it’s easy to picture Jesus walking among the people aiding them spiritually. **Gergesa** is where the **Miracle of the Swine** took place in which Jesus drove demons out of a possessed man into a herd of pigs. **“Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!”** The possessed pigs then ran into the sea.

Who can expel demons? The wretched man knew the answer as he said, **“What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?”** After releasing the man’s demons, Jesus told him: **“Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and what mercy he has shown you.”**

What unclean spirits do we encounter today in our lives that need to be expelled? Though there are “**unclean spirits**” sent by **Satan** that inspired the Catholic rite or exorcism to rid a body of “evil spirits,” **evil is more likely to come from within us.** Sometimes **“we are our own worst enemy.”** **We know what’s right or wrong, but we give in to those thoughts and behaviors that do us harm.**

Where should we seek help? Although we don’t have Jesus, the man, in our midst to help us to deal with demons, we have ourselves and the power of prayer. **We should ask Jesus to help us rid ourselves of negative thoughts** by looking at our blessings and the good side of our lives. Like Norman Vincent Peale, we can use **“The Power of Positive Thinking”** to build a successful new attitude. **Lent this year can be a “NEW DAY” in our lives.**

I complained to a golf instructor that my short game in golf was hurt by my bad habits. He said I should **concentrate on forming new good habits, driving the bad ones out of existence.** **With a new vision and God’s help, our spiritual bad habits can also become phantoms of the past.**

Dee Geisler

Monday, March 4, 2024

Genesis 44:18-34

1 Corinthians 7:25-31

Mark 5:21-43

Mark 5:24-34: So he went with him. And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years. She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, for she said, "If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well." Immediately her hemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched my clothes?" And his disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, 'Who touched me?' " He looked all around to see who had done it. But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

I love the story of the woman with hemorrhages who thought, "If I only touch the cloak of this man Jesus, I will be made well." What great faith she had! She didn't even try to take much of Jesus' time; she didn't prepare her story of great need so He would pity her, she just believed and was healed.

There are times in my life when I couldn't believe enough. I thought that I could do things on my own, with no help from anyone. And you can probably guess the consequences. I often failed because I didn't reach out. Sometimes it means reaching out to others—to Jim or to friends to help me when I can't do it on my own. Just today I needed Jim's help to get on a website to register for something. I KNOW that he can do it so much easier than I can. And sometimes it means reaching out to Jesus—if I can only touch His cloak, I KNOW that He can help me.

There are, unfortunately, other times when I don't reach out. My daughter's first full sentence when she was only 10 months old, was, "I do it I-self." Yes, we were so proud of her early speech, but I often think of that as indicative of the human race. "I can do it without help. I don't need anyone to help me. I'm ashamed to ask for help. I'm too good to need help..." There are so many reasons why we should NOT ask for help. But, isn't that exactly when we SHOULD talk to God? He is there waiting to help us, but he waits for us to ask. He never forces Himself upon us, but He is there when we ask.

I have a Lenten Challenge for you. I hope you will take it up for the whole next year, and all your life. Try to start a new habit of turning to God (or to His Son, Jesus—your choice) and saying to yourself, "If only I reach out, I KNOW that He can help me." Call to Him when you are joyful, and call to Him when you are struggling. He will know immediately that you touched His cloak, and will give you what you need most. I have found it isn't always what I thought I needed, but looking back, it was what I needed most.

May you continue to have a blessed Lent, Helen Coleman

Tuesday, March 5, 2024

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

I can relate closely to these readings this year. You see, I am retired and trying to find a good full-time job to supplement my income due to lack of savings. It has been, and continues to be, a challenging journey.

Joseph proclaims a message to his people not to be distressed. He challenges them to look to the future knowing that the Lord will provide for them and that they will not come to poverty. Another scripture, Jeremiah 29:11, says "I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord. Plans to prosper you and not to harm you. To give you a future and a hope."

Paul speaks to his people to be free from all anxieties. Anxiety literally means being painfully troubled in mind. I am reminded of the scripture in Philippians 4:6-7: "Be anxious for nothing, 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 minds through Christ Jesus." He wants us to be holy in body and spirit. We are vessels made sacred and valued by God. I found a great quote a few years ago: "Where there is wholeness, therein lies holiness." God wants us to feel whole and be at peace.

Jesus speaks to his disciples in a similar vein. He tells them we are not meant to do the work of the kingdom alone. He sends them out in groups of two so they can support each other. Again, we are told not to take any possessions but to rely on the Lord to find people of hospitality to meet our needs. Our families may not recognize our unique gifts, but other people will. With those gifts we can support and encourage each other and work towards serving others and expanding the Kingdom of God.

Eric Soderstrom

Wednesday, March 6, 2024

Genesis 45:16-28

1 Corinthians 8:1-13

Mark 6:13-29

The common theme of these scriptures is pleasing family. This instinct is prewired into us, and we will do almost anything to achieve approval from family members. As children, many times we make many decisions, and our actions reflect what our parents want and expect from us. As parents, we try to make sure that we make our children happy (know their favorites such as music, sports, and fashion). Even between siblings, we try to make sure that our sibling at minimum approves of what we are doing and possibly even joins us on our journey called life.

Sometimes the need to please goes against what is good and right. The story of Herodias in the gospel crosses the line of good. We are commanded not to kill, and yet Herod had John the Baptist killed to please Herodias. Herodias was the one who had a grudge against John, not Herod, but couldn't deal with her hatred herself. Sometimes it is confusion that causes unusual thoughts, beliefs, and practices. Paul talks about whether or not to eat meat sacrificed to pagan gods. If this causes his brother's or sister's failings, he won't eat meat. We have probably done this ourselves – avoided eating something because it caused harm to others. It may not fall into the not good category, but it does undermine a person's choice to eat what he or she chooses.

How do we reconcile the need to please with actions that are extreme? We think it goes back to what Jesus preaches – love our neighbor as ourselves. If something doesn't quite feel right, it probably isn't. There may be another solution less controversial that works for all involved. If it feels extreme, you may need to research it more and then decide (with God's help) if it will work for you.

Thomas and Cathy Hager

Thursday, March 7, 2024

Genesis 46:1-7

1 Corinthians 9:1-15

Mark 6:30-46

I wonder what it would have been like to be part of the crowd that day. I could have heard that Jesus was in the area, dropped everything and walk along way to listen to him. I could imagine the excitement in the crowd. 5,000 people listening, learning, and reflecting all day. I could also image that towards the end of the day, after traveling so far, I would probably be getting tired and hungry, realizing that in I forgot to bring anything to eat. I may even have been getting a bit concerned when seeing how little food there was to feed so many...and then amazed when so little was able to feed so many. Everyone had their fill. I've heard the Loaves and Fishes story many times, but what have I really learned? And how am I demonstrating this learning every day?

Today, I wonder...am I not still in the crowd? I look around, and there are still so many people in need of food, physically (hunger, unhoused) and spiritually (loneliness, fear, despair, anger, hopelessness). When seeing all this, is my first reaction like that of the apostles just to "send them away so that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy something for themselves?" That is, let them figure it out for themselves, not considering the underlying assumption that everyone has the wherewithal to do such. This is always the easy way out.

Well, Jesus never seems to take the easy way out. Upon reflection, I believe that he is teaching me that I can make a difference...that there are enough resources in our community, our country, our world to ensure everyone is fed, physically and spiritually. If we were all willing to sacrifice even just a little...a little fish, a little bread...making that donation to charity, taking time to visit someone who is lonely or sick, forgiving a debt, calling someone who you know if feeling down, smiling, the simplest acts of kindness... God will transform these exponentially as so to create a more loving world.

With Love,
John Geraci

Friday, March 8, 2024

Genesis 47:1-26
1 Corinthians 9:16-27
Mark 6:47-56

In the past when I have contributed to the Lenten Lectionary, I have been able to find a theme across the readings. This time these feel like three very disconnected readings with two of them stories. Here are my thoughts:

Genesis – When I look at the Egyptians, everything they owned including themselves became property of the Pharaoh. I can equate that to myself and God – everything I have, including my life belongs to God. In verse 25 the Egyptians are expressing gratitude after becoming slaves to Pharaoh. If I paraphrase that verse it can apply to me “You have saved my life; may it please my lord, I will be a slave to God.”

Mark – What stood out to me on the story of Jesus walking on water and calming the winds was in verses 51b and 52a: “And they were utterly astounded, for they did not understand....” I am sure I would have been right there with them – utterly astounded and without understanding.

1 Corinthians – Paul came across to me as a salesman in this passage. I have heard other salesmen say what he stated, “To the *(fill in the blank)*, I became *(fill in the blank)*.” He knew that it was important to share the message he had to whomever would listen. This worked for Paul but doesn’t work for me. I am one of the worst salespeople in the world and that is okay. God does not expect me to be Paul but to be me and share the blessings in my own way. The important thing is to share the blessing, by word, deed, or attitude.

Meg Lindley

Saturday, March 9th, 2024

Genesis 47:27 - 48:7

1 Corinthians 10:1-13

Mark 7:1-23

These are three readings from three very different times. Is there a common theme? Maybe. Each one reviews our common history and traditions. We try to learn from them, but perhaps we must also remember that it isn't wise to place too much value on our own imperfect interpretations or embellishments. Rather, perhaps we should look to simply yield our will to His and seek God's meaning in the teachings we have inherited.

The passages from Genesis describe the condition of the Israelites in Egypt under Joseph and Pharaoh during the famine. Jacob is dying and asks Joseph to ensure that he is buried, not in Egypt, but rather in the land promised his to him and their descendants by the Lord.

Next, we hear Paul, centuries later, in an epistle to the Corinthians, imploring the new church to remember the history of God's chosen flock: how they were consistently saved by the Lord and how they consistently turned away during times of trial. Paul asks the Corinthians to remember that these lessons and trials are repeated for each in their own time.

In the Gospel of Mark, we hear Jesus asking the Pharisees why they put the strict letter of their interpretation of the law of Moses over the actual meaning of the very Commandments he delivered.

Joseph and Jacob knew that they were part of a fortunate group, descended from Abraham and Isaac, who put obedience to God above all else. Paul asks the Corinthians (and us) to remember that all of us who are called by Christ are also part of that flock. He contends that they (and we) can surely expect to be tested as the Israelites were after they were led back out of Egypt. What were the tests for the Pharisees, who believed themselves the very best part of the flock in their time? Jesus conveys that they were perhaps a little too focused on multiplying their own success as law-givers, interpreters, and "true representatives" of the Lord. Did they begin over time to forget about simply listening to God?

As I think about how I can honor the traditions of our ancient family who follow God and Christ, I realize that we have much in common with the people of the times during which these passages were written. I think I see that our traditions teach us to first: simply yield to our faith (not our human experience) and obey God. I think Jesus and Paul implore us to follow the gracious Spirit of the laws given to Moses, while being mindful of our constant and common imperfection.

So, I will endeavor to ask myself some questions during this Lenten season:

Do I understand that our Lord has made all of us a part of the ancient family of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph?

Am I acting simply, as they tried to do: with Love for God and my neighbors, (and as Jesus advocates for his disciples and us)?

Am I remembering that I will surely face the temptations all humans have faced through history?

Are there areas in my life where I may resemble a modern-day Pharisee, putting rule or social status above unconditional Love?

As I ask these and other questions, I'm confident that God will provide honest answers that will help me, and I wish the same for you.

Blessings,
Rob Koteskey

Monday, March 11, 2024

Genesis 49:1-28

1 Corinthians 10: 14 – 11:1

Mark 7: 24-37

I read and re-read these assigned passages many times and they “didn’t speak to me”. With apologies to St. Peter, Saint Paul, and the author (s?) of Genesis...this is not you, it’s just where I am lately. Please forgive and be ever patient, as I know this too shall pass.

Meanwhile, I would like to share with you a story of my never-ending spiritual journey. We (as in married life,) were at Gloucester Cathedral—it was 1984. We were awaiting our friends, Ernest and Ella Bladon, to join us and have lunch. I was in the Gift shop looking about, and in the book section I saw this small book, “God Calling,” a Devotional Diary by Two Listeners, published in 1935. When our friends rejoined us, I showed Ella what I had bought, she smiled and said, “One of the Listeners is my cousin!” Coincidence???

Over the years I have read and re-read “God Calling”. It can be a little difficult to understand, then at other times easier. It’s as though I am not to worry about not getting it all at once...makes sense to me. There are repeating themes: Love, Gratitude, Laughter, Joy. Here are a couple of lines:

March 11 (coincidence???): **Seek Beauty**. “Draw Beauty from every flower and joy from the song of birds...Drink in the Beauty of air and colour...look for Beauty and Joy in the world around...it will be given back to the world in the form of a smile or a loving word or the kind thought or prayer. Laugh more, laugh often, Love more, I am with you. I am your Lord.”

Blessings on your Lenten journey,
Patti Farris

Tuesday, March 12, 2024

Genesis 49:29-50

1 Corinthians 11: 17-34

Mark 8:1-10

Mark tells us of the feeding of the 4,000 and the compassion Jesus showed for those who had been with him for 3 days without food. The miracle of feeding them with 7 loaves of bread demonstrated his care and commitment to them.

The question is—what does that tell us for our lives today. When I taught Sunday School to first graders 40 years ago, we had the lesson of the beggar at the gate, and I had difficulty describing a homeless person on the street without a home—or hope. Today that scene is commonplace—and not just limited to unfortunate men.

What that tells us is that we must be committed to those who are hungry and unfortunate. We are all blessed—and have the opportunity to provide for others. Food banks, Monument Crisis Center, the Winter Night's Shelter are all opportunities—to make a difference in someone's life. We don't need to do it on a face-to-face basis—there are many opportunities to painlessly make a difference in someone's life. Through the United Nation's *World Food Program* you can donate \$75.00 a month (tax deductible) and feed a family of four for a year. The opportunities we have are everywhere. Where are we?

Mike Oliver

Wednesday, March 13, 2024

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

The Mark passage starts off with this: "The Pharisees came and began to argue with him, asking him for a sign from heaven, to test him." Even his disciples did not get the signs Jesus listed out: "Do you still not perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Do you have eyes, and fail to see?"

St. Paul told the Corinthians: "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit," giving many examples.

In Genesis, we read this: Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid! Am I in the place of God? Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good."

In an old Cursillo song are these lines: We are one in the Spirit...We will walk hand in hand...and together we will spread the news...that God is in our land.

Today people often see Christianity in the social services it provides, a good companion with secular culture. In my mid-twenties, I had focused on moral teachings when I read Christian writers. It was a surprise to realize the centrality of Jesus in Christianity when I had experiences that brought me to the Cross.

In reading about early history of the Salvation Army in England, one of their early leaders said this: "Christ came to save the world, not civilize it." In a similar vein, the modern theologian, Stanley Hauerwas, states that the first task of the church is to do something that no other body can do: explicitly worship the God revealed in Jesus Christ. Hmmmmm. Service and morality are secondary?

For me, I spread the news that "God is in our land" when I put Jesus in the center of my heart and mind. During communion, we hear Jesus say this: "do this in remembrance of me." I have often heard that remembrance is like re-membering, that is, reconnecting. So far so good. But the opposite of remembering has an element of forgetting in it. I sense that Jesus does not want to be forgotten. When I take communion and especially on Good Friday, I usually say to myself, "Jesus, I will not forget you even if others do."

We all do loving gestures to help give a sign that "God is in our land." But Christian spirituality has been diminishing for at least sixty years in America and the Western world. Maybe we need to update our spiritual gifts. Perhaps, starting with a renewed focus on forgiveness as in the Genesis passage. Maybe going out of the box with those latter gifts from St. Paul's message to the Corinthians: gifts of wisdom, healing, miracles, prophesy, discernment of spirits and tongues and their interpretation. In doing prison ministry, my love for expressing the beauty of God's ideas gives way to the mantra of "listen, listen, love, love." Let us be open to the direction of the Holy Spirit so when we meet Jesus, our hearts will see the world as Christ sees it, having used the signs that spread the news that God is in our land. Amen.

John Gishe

Thursday, March 14, 2024

EXODUS 1:16-22

1 CORINTHIANS 12:12-26

MARK 8-27-9:1

Oppression of the Israelites....a new King of power for Egypt. Egyptians reduced the Israelites subjecting them to slavery. Midwives caring for Hebrews instructed to kill all male children. (Exodus]

The members of the body that are weaker are indispensable....if one suffers, all suffer...if one is honored all rejoice. [Corinthians]

“The son of man must undergo great suffering and be rejected”.[Mark]

The Readings suggest the role of family, which is to interpret the mores of society to its members. The social mores of the culture, values, beliefs, and the standards of morality. Looking for a theme of continuity of both Old and New Testament, it seemed an allegory of good versus evil; with a common thread of the impact of truth versus misinformation, and what becomes behavioral norms. What occurs when there is divisiveness and polar extremes? What happens when fear transitions into acts of hate? Is there a parallel in these biblical writings in what is happening in our world today?

There is much to reflect as we move into this season of Lent. Can we all remember to see the face of Christ in the face of friend and stranger?

Peace and Blessings,
Sheila Wiegand

Friday, March 15, 2024

Exodus 2: 1-22

1 Corinthians 12: 27-13:3

Mark 9: 2-13

You go on a long walk with Jesus up somewhere on Mt. Diablo, perhaps up above Rock City. There is no one around.

You know that Jesus is very, very special. You have heard him bring sound to the deaf, sight to the blind, walk on water. Jesus has even helped a non-Jewish woman. It is bewildering, baffling, wonderful.

Now you are up on the mountain, and whoa! He turns sparkling white! Elijah and Moses appear. Haven't they been dead for quite some time? You are so freaked out you want to build a house for each of them. God talks. "This is my Son, the Beloved. Listen to Him." Then poof! It's all over. It's back to you and Jesus on the mountain.

You want to talk about it, but you don't know where or how to begin. Not only that, Jesus orders you not to talk about it until He has risen from the dead. Risen from the dead??? Jesus tells you that the same way as they messed with Elijah, they will be making things difficult and painful for Him. But, Elijah lives, and so will Jesus.

This is very hard to absorb. But God, having gotten our attention with the special effects, wants us most of all to listen to what Jesus says. His message of love, faith in God, and eternal life are what is important.

Jane Butterfield

Saturday, March 16, 2024

Exodus 2:23-3:15

1 Corinthians 13:1-13

Mark 9: 14-29

Do you require a burning bush for God to get your attention? The Israelites were living as slaves to the people of Egypt, and in their misery, they cried to God for help. God heard their cries. God chose Moses, a man of faith, to deliver his people. He got Moses' attention through a burning bush. Burning, but not consumed, it must have been quite spectacular to Moses who paused in his daily routine to observe the fiery sight. Once God had Moses' attention, he insisted that Moses take off his shoes because he was on holy ground. Before any other discourse, Moses had to respect God's holiness!

Take off his shoes. I pause to ponder this action. Are there times where I fail to recognize that I am in God's presence? Are there times when a person or situation is holy and worthy of respect? I am often wrapped up in my thoughts and may neglect to realize I am in the presence of God or doing God's work. Perhaps I am doing a task I don't like to do but is important to God. Usually my attitude is the problem, not my outward actions, yet God knows our hearts and our bad (or good) attitudes.

There is an expression, "God loves a cheerful giver". In 1 Corinthians 13, the apostle Paul reflects on spiritual gifts without having love for others. Love for others gives meaning to all we do. Without love, we can only brag about our deeds. Like Moses, we could use God's reminder to take off our shoes, clean up our attitudes and walk with pure undefiled footsteps. Walk with love.

As a member of the Altar Guild, I help dust the pews, polish the silver and brass, wash and iron the communion linens, and generally keep the church looking tip-top and set for the lord's supper. Do I appreciate that I am serving in God's house? It is worthy of my respect, and my service is also worthy.

When I drive to my class in the mornings (often running late), do I respect that all those other people trying to cut me off or let me pull in front of them are also children of God? They may also be in a hurry (or not), but they are people. Bless them. Pray for them. Their day may be better by it.

God knew the Israelites sufferings and wanted to deliver them from Egypt. God wanted good things for his children. He said to Moses, "Come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt." As you might relate, Moses really didn't want to do the task God was asking him to do. He didn't say to God, "Are you crazy?" Instead, he responded, "Who am I that I should go?" Moses' reaction shows a sense of inadequacy and lack of faith. He couldn't possibly be of use to God. Moses continued to plead with God, "what if..." and "what shall I say?" Ultimately, God made it clear that He is the God of our ancestors, and of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. So in the end, it was sufficient and a calling for Moses to say to the Israelites, "He has sent me to you".

Do you feel inadequate to be of value to God? When you are "sent," remember to honor and embrace your calling.

Betty Medwedef

Monday, March 18, 2024

Exodus 4:10-31

Corinthians 14: 1-9

Mark 9:30-41

Exodus: "...Now go, and I will be with our mouth and teach you what you are to speak"

Corinthians: "So with yourselves, if in a tongue you utter speech that is not intelligible, how will anyone know what is being said?"

Mark: "...whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ will by no means lose the reward."

These readings remind me how important it is to choose words that will clearly be understood by the person you are talking to. God gives us opportunities to spread His word in many ways. Not only by verbal language but also by the language of our actions.

When I worked in radio, I had to write copy that would be read on air. It could be a challenge to fit a client's information into :15, :30 or :60 seconds. I learned to pick the most important words and eliminate words that did not help get the message across.

I try to follow God with kindness and a smile. A simple "hello" or "have a good day" can make someone's day. Whether I am walking my dog, grocery shopping or just taking a walk downtown, I smile at people. Most of the time I get a smile back. There is a pharmacist who never smiles. One day he did me a favor that he did not have to do. I smiled at him and told him how much I appreciated his kindness. He smiled and I told him to do that more often—he has a beautiful smile. If I see a mother struggling with a stroller through a door, I offer to help. It is sad that so many people are surprised when they receive kindness from a stranger. As one of God's children it is important to me to do for others.

Using our words and our actions in positive ways can make a difference. Simple words like, "good morning, hello or thank you" can make a difference in someone's day as well as fill your heart with joy.

Linda Clark

Tuesday, March 19, 2024

Exodus 5: 1-6

1 Corinthians 14:20-33

Mark 9:42-50

As I began to explore my readings for the assigned scripture reading several weeks ago, I became more perplexed as I realized I was not a very good Bible student. However, today (1/28/24), I realized firsthand that God does indeed listen to us. First of all, Pastor Todd's sermon gave me the reassurance that Jesus can be "loose and easy," and so can I. What a comfort those words can be. Next, after church, three parishioners and I were sharing about so many things including my writing woes. Once again, God is listening – one friend had my same dilemma and understood completely. Another friend advised me to check with Google (which I have just also completed), and the third friend suggested I just follow my heart, which I am doing now.

Almost fifty years ago in Naperville, Illinois, our Episcopal Church had planned to host a FAITH ALIVE program. I think it was the first time I had heard of "speaking in tongues." (Defined by Google as "the fluid vocalizing of speech-like syllables that lack any comprehensive message – a "divine language.") As I try to realize this concept, I immediately think of how much we are all learning and accepting about the changes in our society regarding LBGTQIA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex and Asexual). Again, our fellowship group this morning discussed this, too. I think, for me, understanding "speaking in tongues," and trying to realize and accept these new terms are very similar. The people who experience and understand change are where I hope to be. It is easy to stick to what we know and hope that things "stay the same."

In the final passage, we are told about "cutting off our hand if it causes us to stumble." God loves His children, even us as adult children, He wants us to set examples for children: "do not allow your heart to tell your feet to fall into sin." Pastor Todd's verse this morning: (Matthew 6:34) "Give your entire attention to what God is doing right now, and don't get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow. God will help you deal with whatever hard things come up when the time comes." How true – today's sermon and my three friends certainly were sent by God.

In closing, thanks to Helen for the gift of this annual Lenten Daily Journal. The three scriptures did not speak to me as spiritually as I had hoped, but the gifts that God provided me through friendship today have enabled me to share my thoughts. Hopefully, you will see the connection to the scriptures, or "Maybe so, maybe not, we'll see," "Day by day, dear Lord, help me to see Thee more clearly, love Thee more dearly, and follow Thee more nearly."

Margaret Batesole

Wednesday March 20, 2024

Exodus 7:7-24 Moses tries to persuade Pharaoh to "Let my people go!" staff to snake etc .
2 Corinthians 2:14-3:6 – Paul writes about evangelism, "... The Spirit gives Life."
Mark 10:1-16 – The Pharisees test Jesus using marriage-divorce issue.

2 Corinthians 2:14-17 MSG

But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads in every place the fragrance that comes from knowing him. For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; to the one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things? For we are not peddlers of God's word like so many; but in Christ we speak as persons of sincerity, as persons sent from God and standing in his presence. Does it sound like we're patting ourselves on the back, insisting on our credentials, asserting our authority? Well, we're not. Neither do we need letters of endorsement, either to you or from you. You yourselves are all the endorsement we need. Your very lives are a letter that anyone can read by just looking at you. Christ himself wrote it— not with ink, but with God's living Spirit; not chiseled into stone, but carved into human lives— and we publish it. We couldn't be more sure of ourselves in this— that you, written by Christ himself for God, are our letter of recommendation. We wouldn't think of writing this kind of letter about ourselves. Only God can write such a letter. His letter authorizes us to help carry out this new plan of action. The plan wasn't written out with ink on paper, with pages and pages of legal footnotes, killing your spirit. It's written with Spirit on spirit, his life on our lives!

Christian Nationalism vs Jesus

In case you thought that Faith and politics were separate issues, I beg to differ. As far as Christianity goes, Faith and politics have always been at odds. Jesus quietly railed against a system in a country ruled by the vicious Roman Empire implemented largely by the Jewish Pharisees. The Pharisees were essentially the stooges of the Romans manipulating ancient law to maintain their own power over the local population. The people were quietly exploited and subdued by this political system. When Jesus arrived on the scene, he taught something strikingly different than clashing with others for scraps. He taught that there was an abundance of life in loving one and other from God's Love. This was a strikingly crazy message then as it is now. This Love comes not from laws set in stone but from the Spirit of Love. I am reminded of the simple hymn, "They will know we are Christians by our Love..." You will know what is right, not by laws but by examining what is the loving thing to say and do.

This brings me to my title, "*Christian Nationalism vs Jesus.*" As I read this passage above for this brief writing, it hit me that the news and politics of this protracted election year cycle seems to bring up the topic of Christian Nationalism again and again. Like the Pharisees of old, some politicians seek power not by expounding on the miracles of Jesus but by treating Christianity as an exclusive club and wanting the USA to be the home of that club and excluding all others. Jesus did not teach exclusion, He taught love and reconciliation to all He encountered. The message of Christian Nationalists is not one of love but one of exclusion and hate. Listen carefully this year as you decide on our political leadership: Are the words you say and hear the words of the "Spirit of the Living God" or are they words seeking to subjugate you and others to their will?

Jim Coleman

Thursday, March 21, 2024

Exodus 7:25-8:19

2 Corinthians 3:7-18

Mark 10:17-31

Mark 10: 21-27: Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, "You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions. Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" And the disciples were perplexed at these words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God." They were greatly astounded and said to one another, "Then who can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said, "For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible."

I love this passage in Mark, and I loathe this passage in Mark. Part of me wants to pat myself on the back and say, "Oh, yes, I will be one of those lucky few who can be saved." But that other part grieves because there is so much I can't give away. I've never worried about material things. When I was young, we were very poor, and I didn't miss material things at all. I learned to be independent and take care of myself. I could juggle 4 jobs at college and still do well academically. But I found that I didn't have much sympathy for those who weren't able to do all that I did. I considered myself better than them, because I could manage anything. Maybe it was my pride that I needed work on.

There are so many ways that we can put our wants ahead of our faith. One, of course, is our desire for wealth. If we have enough material things, we may want for nothing. But don't we want for God's comfort? For friendship? For someone to love us just as we are? If we have job security, we may think we want for nothing. But what if we hate our job, and going to work is like dying a little every day?

If we are going to follow Jesus, we need to be brave. Rather than having that attitude of scarcity, we should have His attitude of plenty, or as Bishop Curry says, living abundantly. The more we give, the more we'll receive. The more we reach out to others, the more joy we will feel. Stepping out in faith every day, we can follow Jesus in whichever situation we find ourselves.

Helen Coleman

Friday, March 22, 2024

Exodus 7:25-8:19

2 Corinthians 3:7-18

Mark 10:17-31

As a young teenager, I attended worship services at an Episcopal Church in a small town in the San Joaquin Valley. We didn't have a church building—we met in rooms above the Montgomery Ward store on Main Street.

One Sunday, the Sermon was based on the liturgical seasons. I was struck by the logic and order, and suddenly my whole world took on a sense of order and peace. I developed self-confidence, pursued new opportunities, explored unknown relationships with confidence, and I looked forward to challenges. That day cemented my connection to God, my commitment to follow Christ, and to find a path to help others.

I am so grateful that my life as a wife, a mother, a teacher, a school principal, and community and church volunteer has been filled with opportunities to find “unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord.”

Sally Jess

Saturday, March 23, 2024

Exodus 10:21-11:8

2 Corinthians 4:13-18

Mark 10:46-52

Exodus 10:21-23 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward heaven so that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, a darkness that can be felt." So Moses stretched out his hand toward heaven, and there was dense darkness in all the land of Egypt for three days. People could not see one another, and for three days they could not move from where they were, but all the Israelites had light where they lived.

Mark 10:49-51 Jesus stood still and said, "Call him here." And they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take heart; get up, he is calling you." So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. Then Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man said to him, "My teacher, let me see again." Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has made you well." Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.

Reading these texts together moved me deeply. Moses stretches out his hand and darkness descends over all of Egypt. Deep darkness is the plague Moses delivers to Egypt when Pharaoh will not let the Israelites go into to the wilderness to worship; it is the final plague before the plague of death to the first-born of the Egyptians. Usually when I think about the Exodus, my mind leaps first to the Passover story of the Angel of death, or to the dramatic descent of the locusts that devour all the crops and darken the skies. Reflecting now, this darkness, which permits no light, brings isolation and an inability to move.

Darkness prevents the people from being able to see one another; its power comes from taking away sight and connection. Darkness in this narrative becomes the harbinger of death; in the darkness, death descends upon all the people who have enslaved the Israelites, from the family of the Pharaoh, to the family of the lowly maidservant. The finality of the isolation in death in Egypt is what propels Moses forward as he leads the people out of slavery. The narrative continues the movement of darkness and light as a pillar of fire goes before the people as Moses leads them out of bondage, into the wilderness and freedom.

In a cloud of light and fire Moses receives the Ten Commandments, a gift to teach all people how to relate to God and to one another. What struck me is that we are still a people who walk in darkness and look to the light. "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness— on them light has shined." (Isaiah 9:2) Darkness, ignorance and illusions of power both put us into bondage and allow us to exclude others from God's table of friendship and plenty.

Sometimes darkness is so deep it can be felt; perhaps it is akin to the plague in Exodus. That kind of darkness can tear at our innards, push us into fear, make us believe God is not present and we are alone. Darkness fools us with hopelessness and a belief that we cannot make a difference in the grayness; it can slip inside a community in the form of an

inability to see the needs of all the people. The darkness of hunger, homelessness, abuse, poverty, war, hopelessness, and loneliness are the cries from the blind man, and the segregated lepers. Alone, that chasm of no light cannot be navigated. The power of the story of Bartimaeus, who is blind, is that he is seen not only by Jesus, but also by the disciples and the crowd, “Get up, he is calling you.” We are all being called to “see”, to throw off the cloak that covers us and run toward the voice of the One who is the Light and brings healing. Leaping up against the power of gravity and all that weighs us down, individually and communally, is a leap of faith. And what does Bartimaeus do? He follows Jesus. “Though I walk in the shadow of death, I will not fear” is the turning of our hearts and lives toward the Light and brings the people together.

During Lent, may we light candles to remind us the Light is here. Christ is calling us. In Christ, the Darkness and Light are alike—God is in All.

God, help us to see the fire in our hearts as Lights that chase away darkness, and bring your healing to your people.

Susan Geissler-O’Neil+

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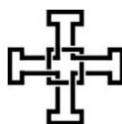
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MARDI GRAS TO EASTER 2024

In a nutshell

MARDI GRAS PANCAKE SUPPER

Tuesday, February 13th - 5:30 to 7pm in Parish Hall.

Take a break from making dinner (and doing dishes)! Please join us for a pancake supper. Our SCOUTS will be preparing and serving delicious pancakes for all to enjoy! You may even see our Mardi Gras decor dusted off and put to use!

Food will be served from **5:30 - 7pm** in Parish Hall. \$5 suggested donation.

Sign up is NOT required, but very helpful... so even if you don't sign up and can come, please do! See Thursday's email or St. Timothy's website for sign up link (or call/email the office.)

LENTEN SCHEDULE

Schedule during Lent

Wednesdays (Feb 21, 28 & March 6, 13, 20, 27)

Bible Study at 11am in the church and via zoom

Noonday Eucharist at 12pm in the church

Fridays (Feb 16, 23 & March 1, 8, 15, 22)

Stations of the Cross at 12pm (Good Friday stations will be at 1pm)

Sundays (Feb 18, 25 & March 3, 10, 17)

Regular worship times at 8 and 10am

Lent Adult Formation at 11:15am

Lent Youth Formation at 11:15am

HOLY WEEK

- Sunday, March 24 - **Palm Sunday Worship** (8 and 10am)
- Thursday, March 28 - **Maundy Thursday** worship with hand/foot washing and stripping of the altar (7pm)
- Friday, March 29 - **Good Friday**
 - Service - 12 pm (in person and livestream). 7pm (in person)
 - Stations of the Cross at 1pm
- Saturday, March 30
 - Holy Saturday service (no communion) at 9am
 - **Easter Vigil** (new fire with incense outside & bells) at 7pm
- Sunday, March 31 - **Easter Sunday** Worship (8 and 10am)
 - Easter celebration for children and youth (11:15am)