

Lenten Lectionary



2023

St. Timothy's Episcopal Church

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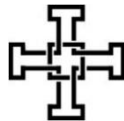
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Introduction Lent 2023

Welcome to the 31st edition of our Lenten Lectionary. Sally Potts began the first Lectionary in 1992, hoping to inspire parishioners to keep a holy Lent by writing, and then reading, our thoughts and reactions to our Lenten Scriptures. We've gone through several editors and authors in the intervening years, but our mission remains the same: to help you keep a holy Lent by offering you our own meditations each day,

I hope that each family will find a special time to read and reflect on our offerings. Jim and I read the daily meditation at breakfast, then discuss our reactions to it. You may find dinnertime or bedtime better for you--whatever works!

I'd like to share one of my favorite Psalms with you—Psalms 121. I memorized it in the King James version as a little girl, and still recite it often (especially when I'm out hiking!!) I hope that you too will find that you can rest in the Lord, knowing that He is with you always,

God's peace,
Helen C

Psalm 121 (NIV)

I lift up my eyes to hills—
 where does my help come from?
My help comes from the Lord,
 the Maker of heaven and earth.
He will not let your foot slip—
 he who watches you will not slumber;
indeed, he who watches over Israel
 will neither slumber nor sleep.
The Lord watches over you—
 the Lord is your shade at your right hand;
the sun will not harm you by day,
 nor the moon by night.
The Lord will keep you from all harm—
 he will watch over your life;
the Lord will watch over your coming and going
 both now and forevermore.

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.

Thursday, February 23, 2023

Deuteronomy 7:6-11

Titus 1:1-16

John 1:29-34

Notes: 1) Though my focus will be on the reading from John, I want to comment on the first two readings. Both Moses and Paul had ecstatic, mystical experiences and their lives abruptly changed course. After the event they became focused on adherence to laws and requirements for achieving a life in God. In John's verses, John is still in the mystical experience. I won't argue about whether that was their divine destiny or not.

2) The phrases in my reflection marked by asterisks * are "not quite quotes" from the poem "Oceans" by Juan Ramón Jiménez:

I have a feeling that my boat
has struck, down there in the depths,
against a great thing.
And nothing
happens! Nothing...Silence...Waves...

--Nothing happens? Or has everything happened,
and are we standing now, quietly, in the new life?

The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.' I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel." And John testified, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God." John 1:29-34

For many years of my religious life, I focused on rules and requirements to make myself feel faithful. Most of the time that did not feel very spiritual. Then Holy Spirit intervened ...whoa, what was that? "Nothing had changed, yet everything had changed." * I had nowhere to place it in my religious practice at the time, so it got tucked away in memory to be pondered in quiet moments. Well, it got tucked away for a long time. I called it a religious experience, but what religion? I didn't want to bind it in rules or doctrine so left the church and began a solo spiritual journey. It would take more than twenty years until I found an earth centered spiritual group that nurtured mysticism and began to share and find meaning in it. Being rooted in Christianity and informed by earth spirituality, I thought of what had happened as an encounter with the Holy Spirit that moves around and through all entities in God's creation. The message it carried was about oneness, love, and keeping love flowing.

In only 172 words John the Apostle manages to get in God, Son of God, and Holy Spirit; and John the Baptist witnessing the Trinity in action as the **Father** sends **Holy Spirit** onto the **Son**. Did John and Jesus know what was going to happen as Jesus came up out of the water? Did they experience the descent of the Holy Spirit onto Jesus as a mystical event? Did Jesus expect to be proclaimed Son of God? If Jesus had a different plan for his life, it changed in that moment. Jesus began His Spirit-filled journey to the cross and beyond. Along the way Jesus spread messages of oneness, love, and keeping love flowing.

May your 2023 Lenten journey to the cross be filled with a renewed sense of Holy Spirit, and at resurrection you find yourself "standing in new life" *.

Gloria R

Friday, February 24, 2023

Deuteronomy 7:12-16

TITUS 2:1-15

John 1:35-42

Titus 2:7-8: Show yourself in all respects a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, gravity, and sound speech that cannot be censured; then any opponent will be put to shame, having nothing evil to say of us.

I chose this letter of Paul to Titus because the message for me is to pass to others the goodness I have learned from my past teachers.

If we can live the example taught to us by those we honor and respect, then I believe that Jesus' message as our Rabbi lives on.

There is a Japanese proverb that says:

Better than a thousand years of diligent study

Is one day with a great teacher.

Being "a model of good works" could be showing your child how you want them to behave by actually doing that positive behavior yourself. It could be letting a passing driver merge ahead of you on the freeway. It could be thanking the person who finally comes on the phone line after you have waited for twenty minutes. Being a "model of good works" might even be saying "I'm sorry," if those words could help a broken heart.

This Lenten season, I am going to try to remember the goodness taught to me by my teachers (whether parents, pastors, school staff, or strangers), and my hope is to pass along their wisdom by modeling their good works.

Gayle L

Saturday, February 25, 2023

Deuteronomy 7:17-26

Titus 3:1-15

John 1:43-51

Old Testament: In this section, God is speaking to the Israelites, through Moses, with instructions on how to comport themselves when they enter the land of Canaan. Verse 18 reminds the Israelites of what God did to Pharaoh, and all of Egypt, and assures them God will dispatch any peoples that may do harm to or that they are afraid, or that worship false idols. God reminds the Israelites to remain obedient and He is always present and will protect them. For me, this presents a very black-and-white message. One can either be loyal and obedient or one can choose the other fork in the road that leads to destruction. The simplest example I can think of is to believe in the Lord our God, or, to deny God and worship false idols such as money, violence, corrupt power, and human domination, until one meets their destruction.

Epistle: Here we see the spiritual detail delivered by the apostle Paul with his instructions to Titus on how to lead and teach the members of the community. The things that resonate with me are grace, mercy, and the outpouring of love. The community is in receipt of the grace of God and is saved “not because of any good things they have done, but because of His mercy.” In addition, the people are reminded to stay away from divisive people as these encounters are “unprofitable and useless.” To me, this ideal is what I remember thinking as a child. I was not incredibly wise about avoiding divisive people, but I did know, as a child, what the idea of a “good and honest” person meant. I always thought the most honest person I knew of (other than my father and mother) was the President of the United States. Those halcyon days and ideas are long gone, but through faith and prayer, hopefully peace and honesty will prevail.

Gospel: This passage from the New Testament describes an encounter between Jesus and Philip and Nathaniel. Jesus calls Philip to follow him. Jesus does not mention Nathaniel, but Philip tells Nathaniel and urges him to join in the call. At first reaction, Nathaniel is skeptical about being called to see Jesus and states “nothing good can come from Nazareth.” However, upon his encounter with Jesus, the power and transformative nature of the meeting is made clear to Nathaniel upon Jesus telling him that he saw him under the fig tree. Jesus also affirms that Nathaniel is an Israelite with no deceit. Nathaniel suddenly changes his perception of Jesus.

I am reminded of the times when I have been guilty of unreasonable prejudices. Every time I regretted my pre-judgements and learned a character lesson that taught me to be more open and less biased. The habit was difficult to eliminate, but each time I caught myself in that situation, I benefited from prior experience by making the situation more accepting, inclusive, and open. My faith in Christ has given me the strength to strive for improvement and to develop a deeper understanding of who Jesus is.

Mike M

Monday, February 27, 2023

Deuteronomy 8:11-20

Hebrews 2: 11-18

John 2 1-12

Thankfully all of these scriptures are familiar, and I could have written on any of the three. But Deuteronomy spoke to me on this rainy Saturday morning.

Here we pick up the story of Moses and his flock of malcontents, where he warns them not to forget what God has done for them. He delivered them out of Egypt, gave them food where there was none and still they complained. Then God gave commandments, ordinances and statutes to live by. Fine at first, then time passes and life is good, very good, with plenty of food, herds and flocks multiply, fine homes, gold and silver, what more could one ask for? How about acknowledging the source? Oh no, it becomes, I, I, I, and me, me, me. My power and my might...leaving God out of the equation (Boy, does that sound familiar!) Ever patient God, reminds the Israelites of their covenant between God and his people, and that he is God above all gods. Moses warns them/us, "Don't say MY power and the might of my own hand has given me this wealth. Remember that the Lord your God gives you power and wealth to confirm his covenant with your ancestors, as he does today" I will spare you verses 19 and 20 filled with Old Testament warning and threats. I would prefer to say that leading a life of gratitude and thankfulness is, in my opinion, what God wants from and for us.

From my story: I was divorced after nearly 40 years married and I was ill from the stress of it all. Combine that with my difficulty with numbers, dates, time, etc., leads to bookkeeping being a constant challenge, even to this day. I was recovering, and trying to do what I thought was impossible...setting monthly budgets, paying taxes etc, on what was at first a limited budget. I still have the piece of cardboard with each month's budget carefully put on adding machine tape, and carefully taped to the front. On the back of that cardboard I wrote "GOD is my provider, Trust in Him, Be careful, Don't panic, I will be fine." I hardly have the words to express to you what that meant to me, as I read it every month for some years. Today when that anxiety raises its ugly head, as it does from time to time, I take a deep breath and say, "God is my provider, and, Patti, look at what he has done, I am fine!" Thank you!!

Have a Blessed Lenten Journey,
Patti F

Tuesday, February 28, 2023

Deuteronomy 9:4-12

Hebrews 3:1-11

John 2:13-22

The Old Testament, epistle and Gospel all stress a common theme: do not believe that you are receiving God's promises or bounty because of your righteousness—but because of the promise God made to each of you. These lessons stress God's love for believers and his expectations that they follow his commands despite our failings.

In Deuteronomy Moses addresses the Israelites regarding their entry to the promised land:

- Do not believe "It is because of my righteousness that the LORD has brought me in to occupy this land."
- "You have been rebellious against the LORD from the day you came out of the land of Egypt until you came to this place."

In Paul's letter to the Hebrews, he establishes the primacy of Jesus over Moses and recounts the weaknesses of the Israelites in the wilderness:

- "...Jesus is worthy of more glory than Moses, just as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself.
- "Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, as on the day of testing in the wilderness, where your ancestors put me to the test, though they had seen my works for forty years."

John's Gospel recounts Jesus driving the money changers and defilers from the Temple:

- "Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables.
- "He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!"

What do these teachings provide for us in these days and this place? There is no question that we are living in the 'promised land'—safe, fully fed, relatively wealthy and experiencing abundant opportunities. Do we have this bounty as the result of our virtue, righteousness or dedication? I have a hard time personally accepting this premise.

To me, this life, today, is the result of God's grace. We are saved by faith through Grace....God's undeserved favor, it cannot be earned. Peter exhorts us...'each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms'.

Join me in examining and experiencing God's grace and living into Peter's exhortation that we serve others using the gifts God has given each of us.

Mike O

Wednesday March 1, 2023

Deuteronomy 9:13-21

Hebrews 3:12-19

John 2:23-3:15

My husband, Thomas Jajeh, and I, brought our children up for many years in the loving community of St. Timothy Church, before we moved out of the area. Thomas has continued to be an active participant in contributing to the Lenten Lectionary for many years. This year, I expressed my interest in being a contributor, as one of the passages sparked a special message that the Lord has taught me over the years. He kindly handed me the opportunity to share some of my learning from Jesus with all of you.

In our New Testament reading from John (3:3), we see how Nicodemus had a hard time understanding what Jesus meant by being “born from above” vs 3. I thought I understood what Jesus was saying after I had become a Christian and was baptized, but it took some time for me to really grasp what it meant to be, “born from above”. A passage in Romans 6, helped me gain a deeper understanding.

Romans 6: 3-4

³Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

Aha! I saw the connection and discovered what being “born from above” meant to me. I realized that when I was baptized, I wasn't just receiving Jesus into my heart and offering a public confession of my faith, I was receiving a new birth through Jesus.

As we enter this Lenten season together, focusing on all that God has done for us through Jesus Christ, I am encouraged and refreshed by what it means to be “born of God”.

What does, being “born of God” mean to you?

Enjoy Galatians 2:20 as a refreshing reminder of new life through Jesus!

Michele J

Thursday, March 2, 2023

Deuteronomy 9:23-10

Hebrews 4: 1-10

John 3:16-21

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish but may have eternal life” This familiar passage is among the most recited verses that I have ever known, and it has been a constant part of my life. However, it has always brought me some concern, too. For me, Faith has been a true and unexplained gift in my life. As children, my brothers and I were not brought up specifically religious, even though we all three were baptized as Episcopalians. We did not have a traditional family, nor were we regular church goers. I simply was blessed at an early age with Faith. When I was able, I could drive myself to church and my high school YPSL (Episcopal -Young People’s Service League) and college (Episcopal) Canterbury Club were an important part of my life.

This is where my concerns have always troubled me. As a full-fledged, but not religiously fanatic, Christian, believing is just a major part of who I am. But what about the ‘non-believers’ in this world? I know many who are truly ‘spirit filled’ (even if they do not recognize nor name the ‘spirit’) and are kind and caring and loving and honest, but do not nor perhaps have ever had the exposure to church or the blessing of faith. I believe our loving GOD loves everyone; even the Jewish, the Buddhist, the Unbelievers; and others who are not ‘professed Christians.’ Yet this scripture clearly states that ‘everyone who believes in Him may not perish.’ Had I not been blessed with Faith, I may never have had the opportunity or choice to become a believer? Those who are NOT ‘believers’, were simply not as fortunate as I was to have been blessed with faith.

In my darkest and the very worst of painful times, I always know that God is with me and that I am not alone. That has been my strength my whole life. It is because of this faith that I believe God sees and knows the good in all people. In my heart, I think God is really with all people all the time. Even those who are not able to profess to Christianity will still be safely collected in God’s heavenly flock. I know others may see this differently. This is one reason why I love our Episcopal Church so much; because we welcome and love all people. Because God loves me so much, I know everyone, all people, are also loved so much by GOD.

Margaret B

Friday, March 3, 2023

Deuteronomy 10:12-22

Hebrews 4:11-16

John 3:22-36

In these readings are some reminders for “living” my Christianity, including:

- (the one) “who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers”
- (letting the word of God) “judge the thoughts and intentions of (my) heart”
- “He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for he has given the Spirit without measure.”

Since my retirement from Options Recovery Services in December of 2020, I have been participating in the Poor Peoples Campaign” which is a stand for a “moral revival” in our country, in which there is a fulfillment of Christ’s call to us to see Christ in each and every person.

Currently, the Poor Peoples Campaign in California is focusing on the wealth gap in our state. California has the fourth largest economy in the world, and, yet, 51% of the people in California, live in poverty, which, in today’s society means:

- No shelter or unsafe shelter
- Not enough food
- No medical care
- Poor education

Currently, I am listening to the poor and have been challenged with my love of and attachment to my life of luxury and affluence. I am noticing that, if it means that I must give up some of my affluence, I am not really willing to give, even from my abundance.

I have been listening, also, to the conversations about reparations for African Americans in our state, and, once again, I am seeing that while reparations is a huge concern for African Americans in the communities I live in, I hadn’t even heard about reparations. It was an African American woman in my Belong Circle who introduced me to that conversation, which began in 2020.

My prayer for 2023 is to be guided by God in my life, to let God judge the thoughts and intentions of my heart and to trust that God gives the Spirit without measure.

In the work I did at Options from 1999 through 2020, it was my faith and being part of St. Timothy’s that guided me in that work “of God” to set the addicts, the homeless, mentally ill and criminals free.

I trust that God will find his way to deal with the wealth gap in California, particularly in the nine counties of the Bay Area, where I live. –Peg M

Saturday, March 4, 2023

Deuteronomy 11: 18-28

Hebrews 5: 1-10

John 4 1-26

There were several rabbit holes that I dived into in the course of researching and writing this lectionary meditation.

The reading from Deuteronomy seems to admonish the Jews to remember the laws given them by their God, to worship only him and to teach those rules to their children. In addition to teaching, they are to write the laws on the door posts of their houses and on their gates. They are told to love the lord, their God, to walk in his ways and to hold fast to him. They are promised that if they do these things that they will be given the land that they are entering and that the current residents will be driven out before them. If they do not follow these rules there will be a curse, which is not detailed in the section we are reading today. Deuteronomy, as a whole, is supposed to consist of 3 sermons to the Israelites by Moses delivered before they crossed Jordan river into the Promised Land after wandering in the wilderness for 40 years.

The Epistle to the Hebrews does not mention an author and is traditionally attributed to Paul. It discusses the role of every high priest who is to lead worship and to deal gently with the ignorant and the wayward – because he is also subject to weakness. Such a priest should be called by God as was Aaron (the older brother of Moses) and Jesus. The author states that when Jesus was called God, the caller states that he is in the “order of Melchizedek”. Of course, I had to get Wikipedia to explain to me who Melchizedek was. According to Wikipedia, Melchizedek is a king and priest mentioned in Genesis. At the time of Jesus, all priests came from the tribe of Levi. Jesus is from the tribe of Judah. Melchizedek is supposed to have been the son of Noah and therefore lived long before the 12 sons of Jacob from which the 12 tribes originate. (What a rabbit hole this was.) I think of far more importance in this reading is the admonishment to the priests to remember their imperfections when they are ministering to their people and to remember that Jesus offered prayers and ministered to the people following him and to others he encountered on his journeys – including those shunned by most others.

When I have listened to sermons when the story of the encounter of Jesus with the woman at the Samaria is discussed, they frequently focus on the living water that Jesus describes to the woman and his perception that she has had 5 husbands but the man she is currently with is not her husband. After reading Deuteronomy and Hebrews today and then this section from John, it seems to me that one other important point to take from this reading is that Jesus is carrying his message of peace and salvation outside the Jewish community to a national group, the Samaritans, who, by the law, he was not supposed to interact with. He is modeling the behavior that he wants his disciples to carry out – to get out and share his teachings beyond Israel. He is also modeling the teaching that caring for people and ministering to them is more important than following the strictures of the laws they learned from their fathers and the Jewish authorities. It feels to me like Jesus came to this world to teach and show us that there is a better way to interact with our fellow man. We are to care for them – both intellectually and physically.

Sally SP

Monday, March 6, 2023

Jeremiah 1:11-19

Romans 1:1-15

John 4:27-42

The common theme of these passages is the dreaded word evangelism. The basic definition of evangelism is to “preach the gospel to”. Google has the “frequently asked questions” about types of evangelism and what qualifies one to be an evangelist. One can get pretty turned off about spreading the gospel news if the requirements are strong faith and a bachelor’s degree or higher in theology. The press absolutely makes Evangelists out to be evil. Yet the Bible has many stories of people’s strengthening of faith without higher education and yet spreading God’s love. Jeremiah is commanded to tell the inhabitants of the various lands around him about impending events. And the Lord is with him and making him strong enough to handle this. In Romans, Paul describes how he has been filled with grace and apostleship and is eager to proclaim the gospel to all Greeks, barbarians, the wise, the foolish, and of course those who are in Rome. And John discusses belief in Samaria and how eternal life is ongoing and not dictated by season.

I think we are asked to be evangelists and proclaim the things that God has done in our lives. We should have faith, but I don’t believe a degree in theology is necessary. Some education will suffice. It does not have to be big and flashy like what was asked of Jeremiah. We do need to feel God’s peace and grace before we can talk about the things where God made a difference and attribute it to God. The gospel confirms that it can be an ordinary person, specifically one who would rank low in society and probably not highly educated that can feel the extraordinary and share it amongst her fellow citizens.

Blessings,

Cathy H

Tuesday, March 7th, 2023

Jeremiah 2:1-13
Romans 1:16-25
John 4:43-54

All three of these readings made me reflect on my ideas of faith. The Jeremiah and Romans writings talk about the chosen people turning their back on God. They are spoken of disparagingly and unpityingly, as so often in the Old Testament. Those writers were unforgiving. The people of God were painted as feckless and arrogant and deserving of God's wrath. I have always had a problem with this very black and white view of God's treatment of man and womankind. Reading the Old Testament always makes me aware of how little I know about its scholarship.

I went to Catholic school from the age of 5 to 16. The education I received of the Bible was predictably New Testament heavy. The Gospel reading from today was one of those readings I became very familiar with. It's one of the miracles, we were told, that proved the truth of Jesus as the Son of God. I think there are two different messages from the miracles; reward or punishment; the first where faith was "rewarded" with the miracle, the second where Jesus is "punishing" or chiding people for needing to see the miracle to have faith.

For me the meaning of the word "miracle" shows a better way of understanding its purpose. Derived from the Greek and Latin, the word means "to wonder" or "wondering". I think this sheds light on the real effect Jesus was going for, which was to provoke thoughts of faith rather than the faith itself. In my opinion, this is why the God of the Old Testament seems so harsh. It's the expectation of unconditional faith. As usual, Jesus is what people really need to bring them closer to God by inspiring faith and not demanding it.

Caroline F

Wednesday, March 8, 2023

Jeremiah 3: 6-18

Romans 1: 28-2:11

John 5:1-18

“Therefore you have no excuse, whoever you are, when you judge others, for in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, are doing the very same things....Do you not realize that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?” -- Romans 2:1,4

Have you ever passed judgment on others? Have you thought, *“If only he would....”* Or, *“I would never”* Although I may appear pretty non-judgmental, my poor husband has to hear my many slanderous comments. Those who are closest to me are the ones I attack the most. *“It drives me crazy when she...”* or *“If she comes in late one more time, I want to kick her out of the group!”* Note the self-righteous attitude in my exasperation.

People were no different in Paul’s day. Each group thought that they were better than the others. Jews were better than Gentiles. Gentiles were better than Jews. I think I am a better Christian than you. And you think you are more righteous than me. And along came Paul, who said that we ALL have sinned and fallen short. None of us can be the best Christian by works alone. It is our ATTITUDE that matters. We need to repent (ask forgiveness) and change our ways to be in God’s favor. God is there with His arms out, waiting to embrace us when we remember to turn to him.

In college we had a priest who used to say, *“We are in the process of being saved...”* He helped shape many of my adult views of salvation. I think that we repent and are saved over and over again. It is when we think we’re done, that we are better than all those other sinners, that we have problems. That’s when we need to turn to God and say, *“Forgive me, for I knew not what I did.”*

Helen C

Thursday, March 9, 2023

Jeremiah 4: 9-10, 19-28

Romans 2: 12-24

John 5: 19-29

“ . . . you that teach others, will you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal? You that forbid adultery, do you commit adultery? You that abhor idols, do you rob temples? You that boast in the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law?

That passage especially speaks to me during the season of Lent because my chosen career was to teach children. A schoolteacher studies many years to be able to extend knowledge to her pupils in the classroom, and she/he also becomes a role model for kindness, compassion and understanding. Children need to have adults in their lives who don't tell lies or steal from others—who follow the law as examples for them. Adults in my profession are supposed to be especially pure in thought, words and actions.

How careful was I to be **“a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness”**? We know how to help others in this way because **“what the law requires is written on our hearts, to which our own conscience also bears witness.”** The Good Samaritan story comes to mind in reminding me to help others at the time that they are most in need, something that is not easy for most people.

During Lent, I will try to follow **“the law that is in my heart”** and do the following:

Help someone I know that needs help: an older person who can't drive, an ill or lonely person or someone with financial or personal needs.

Example: My elderly friend is lonely and wants to go on drives more often.

A goal during Lent is to make time on my calendar so that she can get her wish.

Make a habit of doing good deeds.

Example: Ignore the poor or careless drivers around me. Enjoy the ride instead.

Allow the rude person to push ahead of me in line or yield my place to a harried mother whose child is tired. A few more minutes of my time won't matter.

3. Many times as a teacher, I told individuals **to show respect, make friends with (love)** another individual despite his/her being unable or unlikely to return respect and love. During Lent, I will make sure I, too, am practicing that basic principle.

Dee G

Friday, March 10, 2023

Jeremiah 5:1-9
Romans 2:25-3:18
John 5:30-47

The Gospel on this date is from John 5 and is of the time when Jesus was performing many miracles and traveling throughout the country. In this scripture section he is speaking of the difficulty the Jewish leaders and other have in accepting who he is and who he represents. Jesus explains that the scriptures they had read, the testimony of John, the words of Moses, and all testimony they have is not evidence enough of who Jesus really is. He says, "I have come in my Father's name, and you do not accept me." It is a fascinating to try to understand in this time period, when they had been looking for the coming of Jesus, they could not accept what was right in front of them. He somehow did not meet their expectations of who was going to give them salvation and eternal life. It is the common theme we find about Jesus. Even though he does great things and says the common themes that match the scriptures of what they were looking for in a savior, they cannot accept this person as he stands in front of them.

The Old Testament passage of Jeremiah has the prophet writing about the search for one decent person "who acts justly and speak the truth." The whole passage is lamenting the accountability and inability of this society to follow of the way of the lord. This unfortunately we have seen many times in history where people and societies have turned away from God and humanity, and we need to be alarmed at what can happen.

The final passage is from Paul's letter to the Romans. He uses the simple explanation that Circumcision is not valid as a covenant with God as Abraham had demanded, if you do not live in the faithful way. It is a long passage to remind us that a symbol is not meaningful if we do not live in the way we have professed that symbol to mean. He uses very strong words saying, "All have turned aside, and together they have become worthless; there is no one who shows kindness, then is not even one."

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

1. Faith does not need to be difficult. Do not doubt something just because it does not perfectly meet your narrative. Accept what you see even if it is not what you expect.
2. Accountability of individuals and societies is what I understood from Jeremiah. We have seen it too many times in history where societies have gone astray. It starts with one of us to "act justly and seek the truth."
3. Kindness, Kindness, Kindness; the number 1, 2, and 3 things told to me by Paul in his letter to the Romans. Live your life in the way God intended, living it truthfully and not symbolically.

Jim P

Saturday, March 11, 2023

Jeremiah 5:20-31

Romans 3:16-31

John 7:1-13

“Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since God is one, and he will justify the circumcised on the ground of faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith.”

Romans is a passage that describes God’s law (the law of faith) and how it applies to all of us. Paul gives us the history of the law of faith, and how Christ sacrificed himself so that our sins were forgiven. Faith is an essential component of this law. Paul eloquently tells us that whether we are Jew or Gentile, the law of faith is the same and applies equally.

Different religions have different practices for living out a life in faith. God welcomes that. Even amongst our own denomination (Episcopalian) or even parish, our faith amongst our members is diverse. The Book of Common Prayer outlines what should be done at a given celebration. We can then choose the scriptures, music, and prayers for that moment. There are several sources for the words we use to proclaim our faith during a service. Even the Lord’s prayer has traditional and modern versions. And when we vary the words themselves (but not the meaning), we are honoring the different traditions of our brothers and sisters.

We think Paul was writing about inclusion. God is inclusive. God loves you. He is less interested in your background or rituals than your ability to love others as you love yourself. He celebrates when people forgive others as they have been forgiven. That is a big part of the law of faith. And it is accessible to everyone.

Blessings,

Cathy and Thomas H

Monday, March 13, 2023

Jeremiah 7:1-15 (NRSV)

Romans 4:1-12 (NRSV)

John 7:14-36 (NRSV)

A reading of these scriptures leads me to many questions. I don't pretend to understand all the facets of the readings, but I do have a few perspectives to share. I will start with sharing that I firmly believe in the Holy Spirit that comes to us when we accept Jesus and his teachings into our lives. That "Spirit" sits alongside our own "intuition", guiding us, when we listen to it, and not to our own human failings of irrationality, anger, selfishness, etc. I think the "Spirit" guides us to be the hands of Christ in loving God and one another, being the helping person to others, etc.

In the Gospel of John, we read the following, (v10), Jesus was at a festival and about the middle of the festival, Jesus went up into the temple and began to teach. (v15) The Jews were astonished at it, saying, "How does this man have such learning when he has never been taught?" (v16) Then Jesus answered them, "My teaching is not mine but his who sent me. Anyone who resolves to do the will of God will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own".

Later in verses (28 & 29), Jesus tells the crowd when they were discussing about where he came from, he says "You know me and where I come from. But I represent one you don't know, and he is true. I know him because I have come from him, and he sent me to you." Here, I think he could be referencing the Trinity, God the Father, or Himself the son when he says, "I came from him." The scripture does not refer to the "Spirit" here except in (v38) that for those who believe in him would experience rivers of living waters was speaking of the "Spirit".

My point in mentioning this is that it seems to me that the "Spirit" could have been working all the time. It was after the resurrection that it came to humankind when Jesus breathed the "Holy Spirit" on his disciples.

I find it interesting to think that the Holy Spirit is Jesus' personal representative in my life. He is always there giving me ideas, thoughts, encouragement, etc, when I need it and sometimes when I don't know I need it.

Remember when two things happen almost simultaneously, like when two friends on opposite sides of the country think of each other and one picks up the phone, calls and they discover the other was having the same thought. We used to call that "ESP, Extra Sensory Perception". Was it really that or the Spirit moving one to call and discover the other had heard the Spirit as well?

I would like to suggest that as Christians, we have this source of guidance and support that comes to us, maybe unconsciously. When we accepted Jesus into our lives, the Holy Spirit comes and helps us follow His words about how we should live our lives, like "love your neighbor as yourself" and how God loves each of us where we are in life. The hard part is listening and letting His voice speak to us through the Spirit. It is even more challenging due to the times in which we live, where everything moves so fast and we are bombarded with materialism every day, and competition at every turn of our lives. It's a wonderful place to be, that when we goof up, He is there to help us up and get back on the "road of life". For that we can be eternally thankful.

Joe C

Tuesday, March 14, 2023

Jeremiah 7:21-34

Romans 4:13-25

John 7:37-52

“So there was a division in the crowd because of him” (John 7:43). A polarized community. Rushing to judgement. Selective listening. Fear of change. Not trying to understand – and even ridiculing anyone whose views are different from their own. Battle lines drawn. Sound familiar?

What struck me in today’s gospel was how Jesus’ community became deeply divided, some truly believing he was the Messiah, while others were truly convinced that he was a fraud and a criminal. Those that didn’t believe based their view upon a narrow line from scripture which said the Messiah would come from Bethlehem, not from Galilee. When one of the Pharisees (Nicodemus) called for a rational discussion before any judgement, he was immediately ridiculed.

Today, there are so many issues where we seemed to have become divided on – abortion, gun safety, education, immigration, race, religion, global warming, vaccinations, schoolbooks...the list goes on and on. We seem to circle ourselves with likeminded people and immediately view opposing opinions as uninformed and ignorant without even really listening to them.

As I reflect on this, I wonder how we would be as a community if we reserved judgement, made space for dialogue, and welcomed those who may have different opinions. I know that this needs to start with me. How do I ensure that I’m welcoming, listening, engaging, and reflecting – to make sure I’m opening my heart to God’s love, and not clouding my mind with prejudice or the fear of being ridiculed for doing what I know is right?

Jesus starts today’s gospel with saying “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me”. No one was excluded from sharing his message – rich, poor, jews, gentile, maybe even pro-life, pro-choice, pro-gun, anti-gun.... He invites all who are to open their hearts to the holy spirit, to live and to love each other together.

With Love,
John G

Wednesday, March 15, 2023

Jeremiah 8: 18-9:6

Romans 5: 1-11

John 8: 12-20

The first reading for today starts with a passage from the prophet Jeremiah, who was called by God to speak God's words to the people. Those words God gives Jeremiah in his heart. I say "heart" because our heart has our feelings, both good and bad. Jeremiah is very emotional, showing his feelings with tears, sorrow, and turmoil in his stomach when he hears any fellow Jews asking, "Is the Lord no longer with us and for his people?" Jeremiah himself is dismayed and mourns the bad things happening in their society. There is lying, and people are doing evil things, not just once but on a regular basis as part of their daily lives. People mislead their friends, and no one tells the truth. People do violent things, one after another.

Jeremiah understands all this as God's people having rejected God's teachings. What immediately comes to my mind are the ten commandments, where there is no mincing of words, starting with, "Thou shalt not..." Many people of Jeremiah's time were not observing them.

Perhaps we see this sort of thing in our own time in our American society. Perhaps it is because fewer people are part of a religious faith community where people from childhood to adulthood have kept open hearts and minds to the loving spirit of God and responded so that they can love others as themselves.

For those without a religious faith, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," helps them to live good and honest lives, hurting no one and helping others.

What was happening at the time of Jeremiah in his society is happening in ours. This is obvious when we read the newspapers and watch the nightly news on television. As in Jeremiah's day, God is still with us with his spirit of love and each of us can help turn things around. We don't have to watch brutality and killing on TV programs. We can use this as a starter to talk with friends and acquaintances about why we don't, because our religious community lives by, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." That belief in the words of our faith is, "Love your neighbor as yourself." Talking with friends about what is happening in our society is an opportunity to invite them to St. Timothy's, where people respond to and try to live by their love of God and their love of others.

"Make me a channel of your peace,
Where there is hatred, let me sow love."

Father Maurice T

Thursday, March 16, 2023

Jeremiah 10:11-24

Romans 5:12-21

John 8:21-32

Jeremiah begins with a depressing scene where the people are lost and desolate to the point that they don't even have a tent to live in. Their leaders are focused on empty idol worship. The people depend on self-reliance and yet all their actions result in failure. They walk around in a state of delusion, feeling numb and stunned, (the literal meaning of the word stupid). The shepherds too have failed them. The job of a shepherd is to remind the sheep that they are part of the flock, that this is their home. When a sheep gets lost, the Shepherd takes them and carries them on his shoulder, so the sheep feels a personal, flesh connection and remembers where his community is. In contrast, Jeremiah declares that Yahweh is the true Lord. If we turn to Him and repent (literally turn around and change one's way of life), he will show mercy and correct our paths.

Paul explains that we all experience sin, where we feel indifferent and have lost our sense of kinship with the Lord and each other. But God has established a covenant relationship with each of us, and Jesus came to embody and remind us of that covenant. He offers us justification leading to eternal life. But we don't have to do something to earn it. It is offered like a judge's declaration in court. Jesus declares us justified. He invites us back into that special covenant relationship between God and His people. We are offered the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness, reflecting God's faithfulness as Lord of the covenant. Grace reflects that the Lord holds us in high regard. That's the true meaning of self-esteem. Most importantly, grace reminds us of our kinship, belonging to the household of God. Like the Good Shepherd, we are shown where our community is, where we belong and are beloved.

John shows Jesus trying to explain to the people His purpose and mission. They misunderstand and even question if He is planning to kill himself. He declares that He is not of this world; He is from above. In the New English Bible, He says: "If you do not believe that I am what I am, you will die in your sins." This is direct reference to Exodus where God says His name is "I am what I am". This is to show that Jesus and the Father are one. But He does not reserve this connection to the Divine for himself. He offers it as a gift to each of us as well. He asks us to believe in Him. To trust and rely on Him. To experience a sense of confidence and experience of kinship to God and our community.

If we continue in His Word, Jesus the Logos of God, we will know the truth and the truth will make us free.

Eric S

Friday, March 17, 2023

Jeremiah 11:1-8,11:14-20

Romans 6:1-11

John 8:33-47

I admit to having a very hard time with Jeremiah for two reasons. The style the author chose for the message for me was more fire and brimstone than I am comfortable with. But I realized that the audience was very different from a 21st Century Californian, so then I tried to focus on the subject / lesson. Once again, the focus is on sin, which for me is a very strong word tightly linked to Hell and eternal damnation.

Romans saves the message for me, in that we are reminded of the gift of Jesus, who for me is a much more understandable and human message. This passage reminds us that Jesus rose from the dead, and with this reading I realized that this belief is the foundation for my belief, that yes, I "sin" on occasion in my actions and behaviors, but that when I realize I have "strayed" and correct myself, I am actually following Jesus' teaching and his actions.

I am writing this on Martin Luther King Day and realize that phrase, "The Slave does not have a permanent place in the household" takes on a very special meaning. I will. from now on. think of this phrase when I catch myself in any thought, word, or deed that does not follow the example set by Jesus.

Steve M

Saturday, March 18, 2023

Jeremiah 13:1-11 (NRSV)

Romans 6:12-23 (NSRV)

John 8:47-59 (NRSV)

Whoever is from God hears the words of God. The reason you do not hear them is that you are not from God." The Jews answered him, "Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?" Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon; but I honor my Father, and you dishonor me. Yet I do not seek my own glory; there is one who seeks it and he is the judge. Very truly, I tell you, whoever keeps my word will never see death." The Jews said to him, "Now we know that you have a demon. Abraham died, and so did the prophets; yet you say, 'Whoever keeps my word will never taste death.' Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? The prophets also died. Who do you claim to be?" Jesus answered, "If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, he of whom you say, 'He is our God,' though you do not know him. But I know him; if I would say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you. But I do know him and I keep his word. Your ancestor Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day; he saw it and was glad." Then the Jews said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?" Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, before Abraham was, I am." So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple. John 8:47-59

This passage is a reminder of how easy it is to follow the advice of others, rather than to listen and stick with the voice of God within us. It takes effort to pause and ask, "Should I give a quick reply to a request for action, or should I pause and ask if this would support my Christian beliefs and bring me closer to God's peace?"

Each day we face choices and make decisions. Let me share an experience. When my husband, John, was offered a huge promotion to become President of a Division of his company, responsible for three chemical plants across the country, involving a relocation to South Carolina, we struggled in making a decision. It would involve many life-altering changes. I would have to leave a teaching position I loved and settle in a place that was hostile to non-natives. In the end we felt God wanted us to go. We were welcomed and became involved at St. James Episcopal Church, the city and the community. We gained an understanding and appreciation of Southern history and culture—and that has led us to a greater embrace of all of God's children, as well as a commitment to love our family, our neighbors and our St. Timothy's Church.

Sally J

Monday, March 20, 2023

Jeremiah 16:10-21

Romans 7:1-12

John 6:1-15

This passage has always been a favorite of mine. 5,000 people needed to be fed. The apostles did not think there was any way to provide for so many people. But Jesus did provide for everyone with food left over. The apostles learned an important lesson that day—trust in God and you will be rewarded.

Like the apostles, so often I face situations that I think have no positive outcome. I will pray but often don't expect an answer. There are so many people that have bigger problems than I have or ever had. Sometimes I feel that I should not ask God for anything because he has given me so much in my life. But a relationship with God is a two-way street. I try to do my best to serve God every day. I am not perfect by any means, but I know that God will love me no matter how many times I stumble.

God may not provide what you want, but He knows what you need. He has led me down paths that were different and not what I expected. But I am so grateful for the love and kindness he has showered on me.

Jesus fed 5,000 people on two fish and five barley loaves. If you love God, he will feed your heart and mind and lead you where you need to go.

Linda C

Tuesday, March 21, 2023

Jeremiah 17:19-27

Romans 7:13-25

John 6:16-27

“Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with my mind I am a slave to the law of God, but with my flesh I am a slave to the law of sin.” Romans 7:24-25

The entire passage of Romans describes in great detail the struggles of being good while we are on our earthly journey. I am no expert on alcoholism or other addictions, but the passage also suggests what must go through the mind of someone so dependent on a chemical or food or gambling addiction continuously. This could also be how someone with depression thinks. I can speak to weight challenges. I know about magic formulas suggested for maintaining a healthy weight (portion control, balance of protein, fruits and vegetables, limit sugars, drink water, exercise). I am all too familiar with what happens when I don't follow these guidelines regularly. It is a constant struggle. Yes, most days I do pretty well and can do what I need to do to be healthy. But the reality is that the flesh does take over the mind. I can walk away from a doughnut, but other, smaller treats that would not work for me might not be so easy, especially in a social setting. If I am overwhelmed, then the flesh wins. Most of us, I think, can relate to this.

How can we get the mind to win more often than the flesh? I think we all struggle with that at times. Have a plan in mind to deal with what you may face with the flesh. Expert advice includes surrounding yourself with those who will support and respect you on your journey. Make sure alternatives are available (fruits and vegetables as snacks, nonalcoholic choices, water, etc). I also think you have to love yourself enough to forgive yourself when the flesh wins. Know what you have to do to correct the bad choices when this happens. As well, it may take an expert to help with some serious challenges of the flesh.

This passage in Romans includes “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! “ Add a supplication for help. It is okay to ask for help, especially from Jesus.

Blessings,

Cathy H

Wednesday, March 22, 2023

OLD TESTAMENT Jeremiah 18:1-11 – Jeremiah called to the potter’s house and learns how God works.

EPISTLE Romans 8:1-11 – Paul encourages Jesus followers to stay focused on the Spirit within then for life and peace.

GOSPEL John 6:27-40 –“I am the bread of Life.”

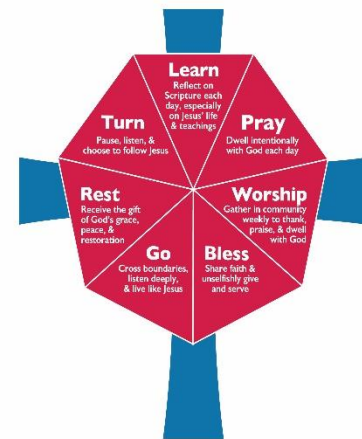
God’s presence makes all things right

The old testament lesson seemed to grab me this time. It is the story of Jeremiah being called by God to the potter’s house. There he saw the potter mess up a pot on the wheel and reform the same clay into a new pot. It then struck Jeremiah that God sees us as unformed clay that can be reworked into something else from the midst of a failure. God doesn’t give up but takes the mess we are in and reforms it into something else.

This winter in Buffalo a man, Jay Whitey, went out into the horrific storm to help a friend. Along the way he got so badly stuck he was going to die in the storm. He knocked at several houses asking for shelter, and they refused. (It caused me to wonder about the community and its attitude towards people.) In my mind, God acted on and through Jay and led him to break into a nearby school for shelter from the storm. Along the way Jay saw others in the same life-threatening predicament. He helped them into the school, saving as many as 24 people. Now this can be interpreted as just plain luck. What I saw in Jay’s story and the Jeremiah passage is that God was able to take a bad situation and reform it into something else. Now there are plenty of stories where things don’t work out so well in our view. But in Jay’s case, something miraculous for him and 24 others happened. God can change what is a mess into something entirely different. With God all things are possible.

The presence of God does make a difference. It is an assumption that God wants us to make the world a better place. It does however require us to be aware and sensitive to God’s presence. The development of that sensitivity comes from working on those spiritual practices from “*The Way of Love: Practices for a Jesus Centered Life*” – Turn, Learn, Pray, Worship, Bless, Go, and Rest. By being awake and aware of God’s presence we can become the clay that can be reformed from a broken state into something far better than ourselves.

Jim C



THE WAY OF LOVE
Practices for Jesus-Centered Life

Thursday, March 23, 2023

Jeremiah 22: 13-23

Romans 8: 12-27

John 6: 41-51

Romans 8:12-27 (NRSV)

So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh-- for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, "Abba! Father!" it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ--if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him. I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

How often have we wondered what to pray for? What should our prayer be for a loved one that is dying? What do we pray for when we are too exhausted from the day that has past to find words? When are thoughts and emotions too scrambled to make any sense? This passage lets us know that we don't have to have the words. God has this. He knows our struggles, our pain, our hearts. We need to trust and surrender. Have hope and patience. Easy to say. Not easy to do. If you can't find the words, give yourself time to be. Listen to your breath. Allow yourself to hear the small voice in the stillness and know that God has got this.

Cathy W

Friday, March 24, 2023

Jeremiah 23 1-8

Romans 8:28-39

John 6:52-59

The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" So Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live forever." He said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum.

John 6:52-59

During Lent, some of us give something up, sometimes something to eat or drink like chocolate or wine or coffee. Usually this is something that is not good for us in excess. We mean to substitute healthier choices and attitudes for the Lenten season. In this passage, Jesus offers the healthier option, although not as literally as his audience supposed.

In this case the bread and the wine are metaphors for abiding in Jesus. He wants us to be so close to Him that we become a part of Him, and He becomes a part of us. I believe that Jesus is always with us in this way, but we are not always aware of His presence. The Romans passage reminds us that nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. 8:38-39). We just need to remind ourselves of this fact.

My awareness of Christ's presence is heightened by spending my time, talent, and treasure in ways that align with His values of justice, righteousness, and love. Do my everyday activities reflect these values? Are there alternative activities that will bring me closer to them?

Richard Rohr says that "Just as the body needs food, so the soul needs meaning, and the spirit needs ultimate meaning." Right before the John passage, Jesus has held a huge potluck, feeding 5,000 (plus women and children) and declared himself to be the Bread of Life. He is the ultimate meaning that we need to sustain us through this life and beyond. During Lent, and beyond, I want to remember that fact when I need to feed my spirit.

Bless you all!

Karen P

Saturday, March 25, 2023

Jeremiah 23:9-15

Romans 9:1-18

John 6:60-71

In this section of John, Jesus puts his followers on the spot—challenging them to look in their hearts and assess whether they believe him enough to stay by his side. Some chose to depart. Peter decided to stay. In the moment when Jesus gave him an out, he doubled down and said, “I’m in.” Where else would I go to hear the words of truth? he proclaims confidently.

Reading this passage has made me consider that choosing Christ isn’t a single moment in time. Rather it is a decision that we make over and over, situation by situation. Sometimes we misstep—remember later Peter would go on to deny Christ? But the opportunity to choose Him will come again.

Last week at church we sang the Hymn “Where He Leads Me.” Having read this passage, and thinking of the need to continually choose Him, the words of the second verse feel less declaratory—less confident—and more aspirational to me.

*I'll go with him through the garden,
I'll go with Him, with Him all the way.
Where He leads me, I will follow,
Where He leads me, I will follow,
Where he leads me, I will follow,
I'll go with Him, with Him all the way.*

I’m not sure what my next choice will be, but these words are my hope.

P.S. When Peter chose to stay, Judas stayed, too. Did Judas choose Jesus in that moment? Or was it performative? Did he already know he would betray Christ? Perhaps he didn’t. Perhaps, he, too genuinely chose Christ, just as Peter did.

Emily G

Monday, March 27, 2023

Jeremiah24: 1-10

Romans 9: 19-33

John 9: 1-17

As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see. The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" Some were saying, "It is he." Others were saying, "No, but it is someone like him." He kept saying, "I am the man." But they kept asking him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' Then I went and washed and received my sight." They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know." They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, "He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see." Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not observe the sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And they were divided. And they said again to the blind man, "What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened." He said, "He is a prophet." John 9: 1-17

The story of the blind man is one of my favorites. I can picture Jesus walking along, and a blind man comes by. His disciples, probably hoping to curry favor by their piousness, ask Jesus who had sinned: the man or his parents. With a big sigh, Jesus says, "Neither." What must it have been like to be handicapped in Jesus' day? Some folks would blame his parents, and others would have said that he'd sinned before even being born. The poor guy wouldn't have had a chance to have a normal life. There would always be the finger pointing and secret judging. What did he or his parents do to get God so mad at him so young??? Aren't we lucky to live in much more enlightened times?

Or do we? When we see someone in a wheelchair, do we treat him exactly the same as we would treat a walking man? Or if we know someone with a hearing loss, do we get irritated at having to repeat our words? How about color? If a person of another race passes by, do we step aside a bit?

Jesus cured the man. But instead of being happy for him, a huge argument broke out. "That can't be him! The man we knew was blind!" Or, "how dare Jesus heal him on the Sabbath!" Did not one person say, "Hurray, our friend can see!" Does that happen today as well? When a prayer is answered, do we think, "I wanted it answered differently." Or when we see someone whose life has just been bettered, do we secretly resent it?

There are so many lessons that I can see in these few verses. I think of the times I didn't like the way my prayers were answered, or I am resentful for the happy news of someone else. I try to turn good news into bad—rain on someone else's parade. Lord, help me to see Your hand in every situation, and to try to be your instrument of peace.

Helen C

Tuesday, March 28, 2023

Jeremiah 25:8 - 17

Romans 10: 1-13

John 9: 18-41

These readings speak to me of faith and what comes from our faith. Both sides are represented – what comes from hearing God and following his teachings, and what happens when we turn our backs on God.

Jeremiah states “I will repay them according to their deeds and the work of their hands”. Although in Jeremiah this is referencing disobedience to God, this is also true when following the word of God. In Galatians 6 this is phrased as, “for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.” This is verified in John with the statement “he (God) does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will”.

Paul, in his letter to the Romans, talks about where faith is rooted – it is in our hearts “For one believes with the heart and so is justified”. For me faith is what allows me to hear God clearer. Although there have been times in my life where I haven’t been listening and God had to work hard to get me to pay attention, it is my faith that knows it is God’s voice I am hearing.

Thankfully God is merciful and rejoices when we open our hearts and minds to his voice.

Meg L

Wednesday, March 29, 2023

Jeremiah 25:30-38

Romans 10: 14-21

John 10: 1-18

Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. But how can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

(Romans 10: 13-15)

It is clear to me that this epistle is asking us to help bring the word of the Lord to everyone we touch. But how do we do that? I often feel that I am not qualified to bring God's word to my own family, let alone to others. I gripe, I whine, I nag, I'd rather take a break...I'm not a good messenger.

But then I remember the words: Who shall go? Who shall be my messenger? Here I am, Lord, send me." If I don't go, who will? God needs us. WE are his hands, his feet, his mouth.

But what shall I say? I truly believe that if we pray and keep an open heart, God will put the words into our mouths. He will put the good deeds into our hands. He will put time to go out of our way for someone into our schedule. The secret is keeping an open heart. We need to be ready to respond as soon as we feel God's nudging. We need to pray so we know when that nudging is from God.

I want to be able to say at the end of each day, "My feet are beautiful because I brought Good News." I hope you'll want to say that, too.

God's peace,
Helen C

Thursday, March 30, 2023

Jeremiah 26:1-16
Romans 11:1-12
John 10: 19-42

Jeremiah, Paul, and Jesus...who is listening?

I think there is a connection between each of these readings and it's about getting away from "ourselves" and listening for God.

Jeremiah

According to the NIV Bible, Jeremiah was known as the prophet of "doom". He did listen to God and tried to impart God's warnings to "clean up your act and obey my laws" but the people, the priests, the prophets and the officials of Judah took offense and tried to condemn Jeremiah to death for being so critical. Better heads prevailed, the faithful ones, the good listeners who believed Jeremiah knew the nature of God and spoke on God's behalf.

Romans

Paul is trying to get the Jews and the Gentiles to listen to God's promise and grace telling the story of Elijah pleading for help as Israel has abandoned God and all that He has given Israel. Even in the destruction, God has found a "remnant", seven thousand Israelites still faithful to Him, not Baal. Paul, drawing a parallel, uses the story to say God has chosen with grace the Gentile "remnant" even among the Jews to become a part of his faithful followers. Elijah and Paul knew the nature of God, both listened.

John

I love the sheep story in John. Jesus tells the Jews at the temple ..."my sheep hear my voice. I know them and they follow me". The idea that sheep are so trusting of the one who feeds, guides and protects them is amazing. They know and listen for the good shepherd. True followers of Jesus have this ability to push away from the "me mentality" and move outside themselves to be a part of Jesus and what He wants us to be, "The majority of us have no ear for anything but ourselves. We cannot hear anything from God". Oswald Chambers (author of My Utmost for His Highest) Chambers' message is tough, as was Jeremiah's and Paul's and Jesus'. So how do we get outside ourselves to hear how God is speaking to us? I think taking time to worship on Sunday morning is a good start as well as study, prayer, service or an inspirational story. It's a walk with nature, taking a giant courageous leap to do something outside our comfort zone, or it's simply waiting. Waiting for an answer and if we are listening, He will tell us what to do.

Kathy W

Friday, March 31, 2023

OLD TESTAMENT Jeremiah 29:1, 4-13 – Jeremiah to the exiles in Babylon: live, prosper, seek, and find God there.
EPISTLE Romans 11:13-24 – Paul welcomes gentiles with a warning of God's power by discussing olive tree grafts.
GOSPEL John 11:1-27 – Jesus goes to do the Lazarus miracle so others might believe.

God's presence remains timeless

My style is to write a one sentence distillation of the lessons to give the reader a sense of what is in the lesson. Perhaps it will inspire you to read them for your own understanding or look at a contemporary biblical interpretation like the Message. What you see may likely be different than what I picked up on. These three passages seem to show the omnipresence of God in the human condition and the need to seek it today. The Lenten Lectionary is to help you find a path to a greater faith this Lent, whatever your situation.

This is a difficult age filled with strife and rage at whatever situation is at hand. The new awareness of the damages from unrestrained technology to our planet's environment have brought a new dimension to conflict and fear that has always been driven by inter-personal and inter-political conflicts. But isn't every age challenging in some way? God calls to you now just as God always called and been available agelessly to every generation. In Babylon, God called the people through Jeremiah to support one and other by supporting the very community that was exploiting them! God called them to live, prosper, and find God there, even in the misery of exile. God was there for them.

Through Paul, God called to the non-Jewish Romans (gentiles-outsiders) that they could be as connected to God as branches are connected to the root of a tree. But Paul also warns them when they lose connection to God that they are no different from the disconnected Jewish insiders. The state of being connected to God brings a fulfilling life regardless of status, location, or genealogy. God was there for them.

Lastly, John's gospel relates how God, through Jesus, arranged to perform the miracle of raising Lazarus so that the skeptical and hostile others in Bethany might believe. Jesus proclaimed God's power and life to that hostile community as they see Martha and Mary's joy in Jesus' love. God was there for them.

So, what can we see of ourselves in our time from these passages? Are we not living like exiles in a Babylon community surrounded by those whose values are at odds with our Christian teachings? Can we stay connected to the God "root" and have abundant life like Paul's outsider Roman gentiles? Haven't we seen miracles of people making recoveries from modern medical technology? Are these so unlike Lazarus' recovery that they are any different? God is here! God is calling to us in different ways to live and stay connected to God while in this community and age. When connected to God, can we try to be that miracle like Jesus in unfriendly Bethany and bring faith and belief to others around us? This Lent these passages say to me, "Stay connected to God and go out sharing God's love and healing in the broken and bitter world around us."

God is here for us.

Jim C

Saturday, April 1, 2023

Jeremiah 31:27-34

Romans 11:25-36

John 11:28-44

“Jesus began to weep.” We want our own heart and our country’s heart to have the heart of Jesus, but both are often dull. Why? Here is St. Paul’s answer: “So that you may not claim to be wiser than you are...I want you to understand this mystery: a hardening has come upon part of Israel.” If we are not humble personally and as a nation, “All shall die for their own sins,” as Jeremiah noted.

In my personal life, I have been humbled into realizing how ordinary I am, no wiser than others are. Depending on which side of the political divide you are on, you will determine the areas where humility is needed. When I taught my class in philosophy and religion at my public high school, I had to champion whatever outlook we took up, pleading their case. That was sometimes hard when I had little personal sympathy with it. But if I was not open and vulnerable, how could my students be open to deeper truths? If our country is to heal, more openness must be modeled by Christians. Only then can we really hear the promise in Jeremiah, “I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”

Amen.

Peace,

John G

Monday, April 3, 2023

Jeremiah 12:1-16

Philippians 3:1-14

John 12:9-19

The crowd yelled, "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!" It would be crowds that would cry out only a few days later, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" My first encounter of God was when I fell in love with the beauty of ideas in college. Reading Marcus Aurelius' Meditations, introduced me to elegant thought, taking me out of my sheltered naivete into a larger world. So, I could see myself yelling out, "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!" OK, I did not understand who Jesus really was, but neither did the crowd, as we see a few days later!

"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Hebrews 10:31) Would the crowd have wanted to crucify him if they had not first wanted to elevate him? I think not. My falling in love with the beauty of God opened me up to more of God than I knew how to handle. There is a holiness in the Divine Ground that a rash young thinker like myself was not respectful of. So, my saying "Blessed is the one" led me and those others who trespass His Holy Ground to see the Judgment of God. Years later that would bring me to the Cross.

So, as we enter into Holy Week, maybe we need to realize that it is good to bless the Lord today, but also, have the humility to avoid finding ourselves saying to crucify Him later in the week. That is why I am a Cross and Resurrection man.

AMEN.

John G

Tuesday, April 4, 2023

Isiah 49:1-7
Corinthians 1:18-31
John 1: 20-26

There are bits and pieces of each of the appointed readings for this Tuesday in Holy Week, that are familiar, and I could give you my reflections on them. For some reason I feel called to talk to you about Holy Week and what it has meant to me in my journey.

I was privileged to go to the Holy Land many years ago and walked the Via Dolorosa. I have been to the place where tradition says Jesus was Crucified, and where he was laid in the tomb. I know full well that we don't know precisely where all these historical events took place, and for me that didn't matter. I hold in my heart many memories of that special time and those places. During Holy Week Services, I close my eyes and I remember the colors, sounds, the people of many cultures, and the tension that filled the air.

I appreciate the work that goes into Holy Week, helping us to see and feel those events. The "drama", for lack of a better word, leading up to crucifixion on Good Friday, the darkness, the hopelessness, and the feeling of abandonment, the Altar Stripped, the Aumbry emptied. What a dark time for the world, and for the family, friends and followers of Jesus. Some have experienced similar feelings in our lives and can relate. I often wonder if I were alive then, and a follower of Jesus, how would I have reacted? I love to think that I would stay and support Jesus in his last hours on earth, but realistically know I would probably be right there with Peter who denied Jesus 3 times.

As 21st Century believers we prepare for Easter...perhaps new clothes bought, Easter Baskets at the ready, Easter Dinner planned, it is easy to be swept up. I suggest that we take time to reflect on the events before, remembering the sacrifice made for us. Here at St. Timothy's, we are given an opportunity to do just that. The Clergy, Choir, Altar Guild and those who serve at each service, greeters, ushers etc....never forgetting those who decorate, who go to great length helping our Holy Week experience.... soon to see the glory that waits us at Easter. Thanks be to God!!

I wish you Blessings this Holy Week.

Patti F

LENT, HOLY WEEK AND EASTER

Mardi Gras, February 21st

6:30pm - Scouts cook dinner! Parish Hall

Ash Wednesday, February 22nd

12pm & 7pm - Imposition of ashes and communion

Lenten Sundays (February 26th, March 5th, 12th, 19th, 26th)

11am - Young people Sunday school, Parish Hall

11:20am - Adult formation, various subjects, Grace House

Lenten Fridays (February 24th, March 3rd, 10th, 17th, 24th, 31st)

12pm, noon - The Stations of the Cross - every Friday in Lent in the meditation garden

On Good Friday, April 7th, stations happen at 1pm following worship.

Easter flower dedications begin March 6th

We will be receiving your flower dedications until March 28th.

Palm Sunday, April 2nd

8am and 10am worship

Blessing of the Palms with procession into the church

Maundy Thursday, April 6th

7pm - Communion, hand washing & stripping of the Altar

Good Friday, April 7th

12pm & 7pm - Good Friday Liturgy

1pm - Stations of the Cross in meditation garden, weather permitting

Holy Saturday, April 8th

9am - Holy Saturday service, no communion (about 20 minutes)

Easter Vigil, also on April 8th

7pm - New fire with incense outside. Don't forget your bells (about 75 minutes)

Easter Sunday, April 9th

8am and 10am - Communion with Easter music; Easter activity for kids and youth 11am