



WEEK 6

Monday, April 4

Reading: Isaiah 43:18-19 *Forget the former things, do not dwell on the past. See I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up, do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland.*

Thought: As I contemplate this verse and write this devotion I am thinking of spring. The days are definitely longer, the grass is greening up and I have little bulbs sprouting in my garden. Today – March 29 – the first snowdrop is blooming. Every year I look forward to this time of renewal – not just spring but Lent as well. Just as spring comes every year, we are called to renew ourselves over and over again. Being made new isn't a one-time thing and isn't confined to us as individuals. Our church needs to be renewed constantly as well. Winter and Covid may feel like a wasteland, but God is providing a way out. Perhaps this is the time for you to consider what path God is calling you to take. A new kind of service may be waiting just for you!

How will you renew yourself this year?

Prayer: Creator God – you bring spring into my life and joy with every step. Guide me on the way out of the desert and to the streams you provide.



Tuesday, April 5

Reading: Luke 19:10 *The Son of Man has come to seek and to save what was lost*

Thought: This is the end of the story of Zacchaeus, the short tax collector who entertained Jesus in his home and then became a reformed man, giving to the poor and repaying those he had cheated. I have always loved this story. I can just imagine Zacchaeus as a stout, round, little man hanging on to the Sycamore branches and Jesus laughing and calling out “Zacchaeus! Get down from that tree! I am coming to your house for dinner tonight!” This is the kind of thing a true friend like Jesus would do. I always feel comforted that Jesus comes for those who are less attractive and with a less-than-perfect track record. I would love to have that “Zacchaeus” experience.

If Jesus were coming to your house – what would you serve for dinner?

Prayer: Friend Jesus – call me out of the tree! I invite you into my home and into my heart.

Wednesday, April 6

Reading: Psalm 126:1&3 *When the Lord brought back the captives to Zion, we were like those who dreamed...The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy.*

Thought: This verse from the lectionary seems to have been written for us living today as well as for those living in the time that the Psalms were written. Don't you feel a little like you are coming out of captivity? Our council voted last night (March 28) to end our requirement for proof of vaccination in order to attend worship in person and as we come out of isolation and hopefully away from social distancing and masking requirements, I definitely have feelings of joy and rejoicing. It seems a little like coming out of a bad dream and I am finding it easier to reflect on the good – no, the great things – that God has and is providing me.

What wonderful things do you think God has in mind for you and our congregation?

Prayer: God – thank you for all the things great and small that you are providing. I am filled with joy with your love.



Thursday, April 7

Reading: Philippians 3:8 *What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Jesus Christ, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ.*

Thought: Paul is telling the Philippians, and us, that knowing Jesus and having a full spiritual life is worth more than all those things that society seems to value. Paul gave up his social standing, his career, and eventually his life, all because of meeting Jesus. He uses some strong words too. He calls all those accomplishments and possessions that society values nothing more than rubbish.

Paul says that knowing Jesus Christ is the greatest thing you can imagine. Do you agree?

Prayer – Jesus, you are the Christ, the Messiah, my Saviour, and your presence in my life is worth more than anything. Thank you.



Friday, April 8

Reading: John 12:5 *Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages*

Thought: The average annual wage in Alberta in 2018 was about \$35,800. I can just imagine the hue and cry of our congregation if we spent even half of that on incense for our Easter Sunday celebration. So what is the lesson here? I don't think the point of this verse is to be fiscally irresponsible, but instead to carefully identify what we value. One of the best ways to do this is to look at where you spend your time and money. At Southwood, our biggest expenditure is staff salaries – which is a good thing, as it indicates we value our staff. However, our staff spends a lot of time doing things not to serve God, but to serve us. This could mean we value our own time more than theirs. We need people to lighten the load on our staff. There are teams being set up to do exactly that.

Which one will you serve on?

Prayer: Jesus – I love you with my whole heart. Show me how to best use my time and talents to serve you as extravagantly as Mary did.

Saturday, April 9

Reading: Luke 19:30 *Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here*

Thought: I am currently attending one of our learning circles which is reading and exploring the book “Cold Case Christianity.” This book looks at the Gospels through the lens of a forensic investigator, seeking to determine proof that they are recording actual events. One tool we are told to use is to closely examine the choice and meaning of words included in the stories. I have a little experience with young horses, and I find incredible meaning in the detail that Jesus rode a colt that had never been ridden before IN A PARADE. This is a recipe for disaster! Even a colt that has been carefully gentled, prepared to be ridden and acclimatized to frightening things would be expected to panic if its first experience of being ridden included people cheering, palm branches being waved under its nose, and coats being flung under its feet. To me, this is evidence of a real miracle, and its inclusion indicates the truth of the gospels.



What details in the Gospels does that for you?

Prayer: Holy Spirit – I give thanks for the writers of the Gospels and the details they chose to include. Help me to find inspiration and truth in all their words.

Sunday, April 10 – 6th Sunday in Lent - Palm Sunday

Reading: Luke 19:40 *“I tell you, “He replied, “If they (the people) keep quiet, the stones will cry out.”*

Thought: I have a dream of visiting Jerusalem. People I know who have had this opportunity have told me it is an experience of a lifetime. Given the current situation in the world, it is possible that this dream of mine will never be realized, and this makes me sad. It is quite possible that the very stones that Jesus walked on are still exist on the streets of Jerusalem. Oh, to see those stones and to walk on them!

If those stones could talk, what do you think they would say?

Prayer: Jesus – help me to call out and rejoice in your presence just as those people long ago did on Palm Sunday.

