

# **“Let Me Tell You About My Jesus”**

Inspired by the song “My Jesus” by Anne Wilson, we explore various roles Jesus plays. However, this Lent, let us focus on considering Jesus through a more personal lens as He works within and through us. And to also challenge ourselves to share this Good News with others. The goal of the 2023 Lenten Devotional is to remind us of how Jesus shared these traits in the historical context of the Bible. As we follow Jesus on His journey to the cross, reflect on how “My Jesus” has supported us in our past and with confidence, know He will be there for our future.

The Lenten Devotional for 2023 has been a cooperative effort among St. David’s Episcopal Church, Grace Lutheran Church and St. John’s Evangelical Lutheran Church. It is wonderful to share this penitential time of the Church year with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Personal experiences of the contributors have made this Lenten Devotional possible.

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May these forty days bring a new sense of purpose and spiritual joy.

## **"MY JESUS"**

**by Anne Wilson**

Are you past the point of weary?  
Is your burden weighin' heavy?  
Is it all too much to carry?  
Let me tell you 'bout my Jesus  
Do you feel that empty feeling?  
'Cause shame's done all its stealin'  
And you're desperate for some healin'  
Let me tell you 'bout my Jesus **R:**

Who can wipe away the tears  
From broken dreams and wasted years  
And tell the past to disappear? Oh  
Let me tell you 'bout my Jesus  
And all the wrong turns that you would  
Go and undo if you could  
Who can work it all for your good  
Let me tell you about my Jesus **R:**

Who would take my cross to Calvary?  
Pay the price for all my guilty?  
Who would care that much about me?  
Let me tell you 'bout my Jesus, oh **R:**

### **REFRAIN:**

He makes a way where there ain't no way  
Rises up from an empty grave  
Ain't no sinner that He can't save  
Let me tell you 'bout my Jesus  
His love is strong and His grace is free  
And the good news is I know that He  
Can do for you what He's done for me  
Let me tell you 'bout my Jesus  
And let my Jesus change your life

Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah,  
Amen, Amen, Amen \*

### **\* After last Refrain:**

Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah,  
Let my Jesus change your life.

***SHEPHERD - He Makes a Way***

February 22-25



## ***Ash Wednesday, February 22***

**John 10:11**

***"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the Sheep..."***

This passage in John reflects the love and sacrifice of the good shepherd who would give his life to protect the sheep. It is book-ended by verses that talk about the unreliable hired hand who runs away allowing the wolf to scatter the sheep. The hired hand does not love the sheep.

I find myself wondering at the idea of laying down my life for another. Who would be so important to me? Of course, I consider my family members and in so doing, I come to understand once again, how great God's love is... I am His family. His love is like the mother for her child, the daughter to her parent's and now for me, the Oma (grandma) to her grandsons; fierce, loving, protective, sacrificing, forgiving and unabashedly loyal and devoted to her sheep. Thinking of God's love in this way brings a whole new perspective that I need to remind myself of often.

The other element that this verse brings is one of great comfort. God's love is so great that he has, through Jesus Christ, laid down his life for me. With this sacrifice, I need not fear the wolf in any form. The wolf may be, grief, loss, violence, financial hardship, illness, anxiety, and any of the other challenges our world today, puts in our path. God is with me, he will see me through, and his love will shelter and protect me.

### **PRAYER:**

GOD, you are mother, father, shepherd. I am grateful for a love so strong that you sent Jesus to lay down his life to protect me from harm. Be with me, remind me and cause me to express that love in all I do today.

Amen.

## ***Thursday, February 23***

**SCRIPTURE:** 1 Peter 2:25 (NRSVUE)

***<sup>25</sup>For you were going astray like sheep,  
but now you have returned to the shepherd  
and guardian of your souls.***

I think that some of us including me have put Jesus on the back burner of our lives causing us to go astray. When I was in my late teens, I had to get a job to pay my way through college. I no longer had Sundays free. Then, I moved out of town and didn't try to find a way to put Jesus first in my life...still going astray. In March of 2014 my father fell and broke his neck. The doctor said that because of his age (he was 90 at the time) they could not repair the break and that it would never heal.

During this time dad decided that he wanted to go back to church so I agreed to take him. We joined. This was the first step in bringing Christ back into my life. In November of that same year, I took my dad to his doctor. After he had some x-rays, the doctor told him that his neck had completely healed. I believe that Jesus healed my father. This proved to me that that Jesus was there for me and my father.

I have come back to the shepherd and guardian, putting him first in my life. I feel Jesus' love and protection every day. I learned that if you open your heart to hear and follow the voice of Jesus you will also return to the shepherd and feel the love and peace that I do.

**PRAYER:** Lord, please help us to see the benefits of coming back to your loving arms and feeling the love and peace you provide us. Amen.

## ***Friday, February 24***

**SCRIPTURE:** Luke 12:32 (NRSVUE)

***<sup>32</sup>“Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.***

When Jesus spoke to the crowds or to his disciples, he sometimes referred to shepherds and their flocks, as we see here in today’s Bible verse. This made a lot of sense to the people then, since sheep and shepherds were a common sight in their agrarian surroundings.

In the 20th and 21st centuries, shepherds were less obvious, except if you happen to be in a rural area. We tend to think of sheep and shepherds as something unusual, not part of our daily lives, even though it was common 2,000 years ago. So when W. Phillip Keller wrote *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23* in 1969, the book was able to help readers understand and appreciate how meaningful it is to understand the references to sheep and shepherds in the Bible, from the point of view of a 20th century man who happened to also be a modern shepherd. The book continues to shine a light on the significance of Jesus’s caring deeply for us, as a shepherd does for his flock. In today’s verse, Jesus reminds his flock not to be afraid, because God promises his kingdom to us. That should bring us all reassurance of God’s loving care of us, showing us His way, as a shepherd shows his sheep where to go, and how to go, and to feel safe in His loving presence. That’s a comforting, wonderful thing to be aware of every day. And so we can confidently sing this old hymn as a prayer.

**PRAYER:** Savior, like a shepherd lead us;  
(ELW 789) much we need your tender care.  
In your pleasant pastures feed us,  
for our use your fold prepare.  
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus,  
you have bought us; we are yours.  
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus,  
you have bought us; we are yours. Amen.

***Saturday, February 25***

**SCRIPTURE:** Psalm 23:1 (NRSVUE)

***<sup>1</sup>The Lord my shepherd; I shall not want.***

Well, I chose this Bible verse because it is one I see each day hanging on our bedroom wall. Our daughter made a small plaque in Sunday School of those very words except ours says: The Lord is my shepherd; I have everything I need.

Those words speak to me each day so I thought that would make the most perfect theme for me to go along with the overall theme of "Let me tell you about my Jesus. Well, the grey cells thought and thought of something poignant to tell you but it proved fruitless. You all know how the Shepherd leads, how he cares, how he loves, how he gave his life, how he has never left us, even when we might leave him. How those angels always show up to protect and guide us; how he has given us hearts that care and lives to share. How he died that we might live. He has shown us the way, all we have to do is follow.

Sorry to say, there was just no way for me to express all of this in a way you might find memorable. All I can say is that this is my Jesus, I do have everything I need and more. I am blessed to have them and share them. I pray you do too.

**PRAYER:** Lord you have made the way for us. All we need to do is follow. For you are the shepherd and we have everything we need.

Amen.

## ***Teacher - He Changes Lives***

February 26 – March 4





***Monday, February 27***

**SCRIPTURE: James 3:1 (NRSVUE)**

***Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will face stricter judgment.***

Say the word “teacher”: whose face do you see? Who was your favorite teacher? Who taught you something that changed the course of your life? Who was That One Teacher you just couldn’t stand? Was there a teacher who planted some seed of insecurity in you? One way or another, teachers always leave a mark.

Unsurprisingly, we have seen teachers judged harshly forever. Remember poor Mrs. Welch from *It’s a Wonderful Life*? George Bailey (possibly the world’s nicest guy, played by Jimmy Stewart) just tears into her over the phone, *on Christmas eve*, for “letting” little Zuzu catch a cold. Today, parents with a particular worldview descend upon school-board meetings and call for the government to sanction, muzzle, fire or even prosecute teachers who invite their students to – gasp! – think critically about the “established” social order and consider whom it harms.

Even when we do appreciate teachers and recognize their service and sacrifice, we often bristle at the idea of paying them or even equipping them adequately, when we think about what it will cost us personally.

Setting our pocketbooks and petty prejudices aside, we really do need to hold teachers accountable for what they say. I remember one junior high school studies teacher liberally peppering their history lessons with political ideology: *American capitalism will save the world and anyone who doesn’t agree with it isn’t just wrong, they’re an enemy of God.* It took me years to shake that “fact” from my brain.

But as we wrestle with judging teachers too harshly or maybe not harshly enough, we should recognize that we are all teachers, regardless of our job titles. Every time you speak and every time you post something to social media, somebody who looks up to you is probably listening. There is always a chance that what you say will leave a mark.

*Loving Maker who calls teachers to light our paths and shape our thoughts,  
lift all who teach up with the courage, wisdom and humility*

## ***Tuesday, February 28***

**SCRIPTURE:** Romans 12:6-7 (NRSVUE)

***<sup>6</sup>We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; <sup>7</sup>ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching.***

As I see it, these initial verses of Romans 12 present God's admonishment to us to seek and then respond to His unique life plan for each of us. Leading up to today's verses, we are first instructed in Verse 2 to "**not** conform to the pattern of this world, but be **transformed by the renewing of your mind**". After this introduction, the concept of the "**gifts that differ according to the grace given us**" is presented. For me, I am encouraged by these passages to develop, to the fullest extent possible, whatever gifts He has granted me. These grants encourage me to contribute, to the very best of my ability, to make this world a better place for my having been here.

Among the gifts I believe to have been given (confirmed by the numerous aptitude tests I've taken!!) are abilities in engineering, the sciences and mathematics. In this context, what comes to mind for me are the various opportunities I've had over the years to do adjunct and college level teaching in these areas. These teaching experiences reinforce my confidence in the validity of what is stated in, Verse 5: The Church body consists of many members with a variety of talents and functions, all belonging to each other. Think it over: God DEFINITELY has a plan for EACH of us!!!

**PRAYER:** Lord, provide us opportunities to contribute a little good to our world each day, and remind us of Your gifts of our capabilities to carry out these tasks.

Amen.

## ***Wednesday, March 1***

**<sup>1</sup>SCRIPTURE: John 13:14 (NRSVUE)**

**<sup>14</sup>So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.**

Teaching can be rewarding and can change lives. Jesus is our Lord and Teacher. In this verse, Jesus was trying to teach his disciples. Prior to this verse, when Jesus was washing Peter's feet, Peter wanted his whole body washed but Jesus advised him that "he who is clean only needs their feet washed" and told Peter not all the disciples were clean. Jesus knew one of the disciples would betray him but washed all their feet. This was showing true love even though one of the twelve was going to turn on him. I am sure Jesus' washing feet was very shocking to them since he was the Lord. Washing a person's feet can be considered degrading and shameful. Jesus was teaching the disciples that he was the Lord and Master. What Jesus the master does, others can do also. No matter what it may be, He wants us to lead by his example and not be selfish. We should serve and teach others just as He did.

Since Jesus served and taught others, so must his disciples. He gave so much of Himself to others that he was also teaching the twelve about humility. Jesus knew what was going to happen to him and that he was going to endure much pain and humiliation. This teaching was to show grace and put others first. We are also Jesus' disciples and should lead by his example. He has taught us so much. As we reflect during this time of Lent, take a moment to show grace and put others first. Teach others what Jesus has taught us. We can continue to learn from his teachings by coming to church and attending Bible Study. You can always hear his words and understand as your faith grows.

**PRAYER:** Dear God, You are a wonderful teacher and have changed my life in so many ways. Let us take what we learn and lead by your example. Amen.

## ***Thursday, March 2***

**SCRIPTURE:** Luke 11:1-4 (Key Verses 2-4) (NRSVUE)

***So He said to them, "When you pray, say: Father, may Your name be revered as holy. May your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us. And do not bring us to the time of trial."***

One of Jesus' many roles is that of teacher. He not only teaches us to pray, as noted above, but He has lessons for us in every area of our lives, and is eager to guide us, if we just talk to Him and more importantly, listen to Him. How can we respond to certain situations in a Christian manner and how do we know that we're following God's will? The answers to our questions can be found in the Bible.

I especially like Matthew: 5-6 because Jesus speaks clearly, teaching us how to deal with various issues including dealing with anger; loving our enemies; giving our finances and our time, quietly, without bringing attention to ourselves; and, teaching us to be at peace within ourselves and not anxious. We all have various stressors in our lives: ever rising costs of food, gas, and other necessities; weather; community violence; illness;... and the list goes on. Jesus doesn't say that we won't go through difficult times, but He says that we should focus on Him and not the problem. In Matthew 6:27-30, Jesus asks, "Can any of you by worrying add a single moment to your life span?" ..... "If God so clothes the grass of the field, which grows today and is thrown into the oven tomorrow, will He not much more provide for you...? Several years ago the program I supervised at my job was closing and there was a chance I would be unemployed. I found much comfort reading Jesus' parables/teachings and felt a sense of peace, knowing that God is always with me and will lead me through any situation.

**PRAYER:** Jesus, please help me to follow Your word and to always focus on you, rather than on any problems I may have. Please continue to guide me and help me to follow Your ways. Amen.

## ***Friday, March 3***

**SCRIPTURE:** Deuteronomy 32:2 (NRSVUE)

***<sup>2</sup>May my teaching drop like the rain,  
my speech condense like the dew,  
like gentle rain on grass,  
like showers on new growth.***

Everyone knows the saying, “When it rains, it pours.” Sometimes, that’s what God’s lessons can feel like; one after another, unrelenting and exhausting. Just as you recover from one challenge, there’s another waiting around the corner — sort of like a long exam, or trying to please your parents. Like dew, the obstacles of life renew daily, seeping into our attitudes and behavior. Try as we might to do the right thing and make good choices, the incessant obstacles of life can leave us feeling defeated and incapable.

Yet, challenging experiences always provide the opportunity for personal growth and learning from our mistakes. God places obstacles in our way in order to provide us with these opportunities to learn more about not only the world, but also ourselves. As a teacher, God always has our best interests in mind — even when we feel overburdened with lessons.

After a particularly challenging (or costly) experience, my mother always asks, “Valuable lesson or expensive mistake?” I think God poses the same questions to us, as his children, whenever we are faced with obstacles in life. He’s asking, “Now that you’ve overcome this, are you going to learn to behave differently?” If we fail to do so, he may challenge us in the same way again in order to *really* teach us a lesson. However, he does so purely out of his undying love for us; rain showers bring new flowers, and the challenges God puts in our paths result in our education and personal growth.

**PRAYER:** Dear Lord, please give me the patience and courage to tackle the obstacles in my day confidently. Help me view these things that may frustrate me as valuable lessons, and with your support, may I overcome them...and grow. Amen.

***Saturday, March 4***

**SCRIPTURE:** Proverbs 22:6 (NRSVUE)

***<sup>6</sup>For the LORD wisdom; from his mouth  
come knowledge and understanding.***

If you are my age or older, you probably compare the way children today are reprimanded, “Time out” versus how we were reprimanded as children with the wooden spoon or belt. When you look at how so many children have grown into nasty adults, the change wasn’t for the better! We learned to respect our parents and elders. My dad taught us to love God, family & country!

A teacher should be one of the most revered professions because they mold their student’s minds, giving encouragement and changing lives! Today’s parents want their children to have preferential treatment in the classroom and not worry about homework or conduct in class. Teachers need to be allowed to do their jobs and give their students a chance to be better adults! This verse tells us in today’s Bible verse that this is true and Jesus in Matthew tells us to bring children to Him!

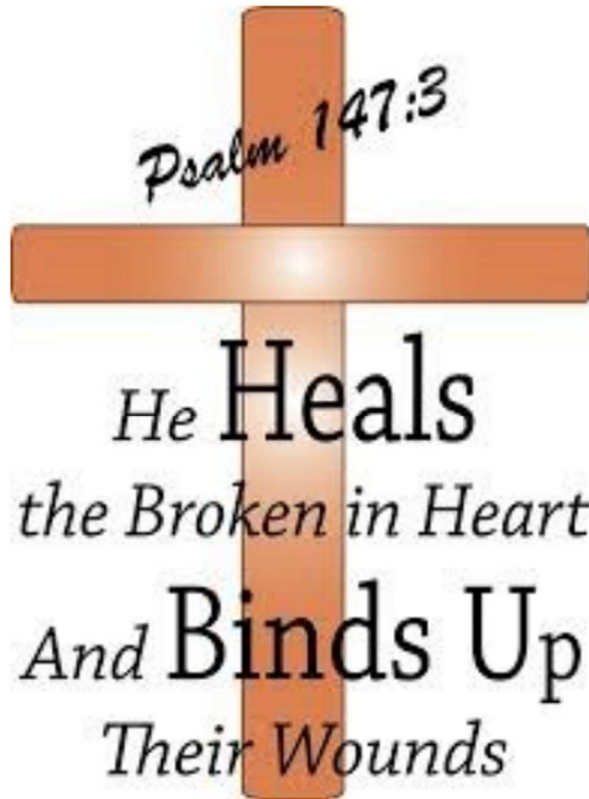
Jesus was the epitome of all teachers. Look at the many references in the Bible where He is in the synagogue as a child, sitting with crowds as an adult, or even in a boat with his disciples-always teaching whether it’s children or adults. Jesus makes constant mention in the Bible that parents need to teach their children the right way to live so that their paths are set as an adult. He encourages parents to love their children, bring them to church, and even challenges His parents when they couldn’t find Him as child, that they should know to find him in the church!

God's book, the Bible, is the best teaching instrument any parent could have for raising a child. The answers are all there. Parents just need to read the Bible themselves and to their children as well. And then to follow God’s advice.

**PRAYER:** Great Teacher, you have taught us the way but we don’t always listen. We too often follow the worldly way and forget that time spent with our children is our most valuable tool for turning them into God fearing adults. Help us be better parents, bringing our children to you for your blessing. Amen.

***Healer - He Helps the Weary***

March 5-11



## ***Monday, March 6***

**SCRIPTURE: Isaiah 53:5 (NRSVUE)**

***<sup>5</sup>But he was wounded for our transgressions,  
crushed for our iniquities;  
upon him was the punishment that made us whole,  
and by his bruises we are healed.***

I believe God is the ultimate healer, but that God also utilizes and blesses our amazing doctors, nurses, and medical facilities, and we should not hesitate to use them. But the Bible tells me victory is found by calling on the name of the Lord and relying on one's strength. Prayer calls on the Lord.

As I write this, it is just a few days since a Buffalo football player lay on the field without a discernable heartbeat. Today he is awake, apparently with full neurological function, and communicating normally. I can't prove that Jesus healed that young man, but healing happened in a huge way. Never before have I seen such an outpouring of prayer from people in all walks of life.

Perhaps healing is in more than just healing the physical body of that particular athlete. Perhaps the healing is in a vast number of people recognizing that prayer is the answer to all of our weariness.

Athletes prayed on the field. People prayed as they watched the paramedics, both in the stadium and on TV channels across the nation, trying to resuscitate this young man. Commentators openly prayed on national TV. People gathered outside at the hospital in Cincinnati and outside the stadium in Buffalo to pray.

I don't know if this will make a lasting impression in our culture, I can only hope so, but it definitely made the awareness of prayer a part of society. Calling on the name of the Lord and relying on's strength brings about healing, not only for those in need of physical healing, but also spiritual healing for those who are praying.



***Tuesday, March 7***

**SCRIPTURE:** James 5:16 (NRSVUE)

***<sup>16</sup>Therefore confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective.***

Throughout our lifetime there are many hard obstacles we must overcome. It may be disappointment in our actions, the actions of others or the way life seemingly continues to push us to the point of grief and despair. With confession and prayer, God is our Healer!

Lent is a time to prepare for Easter, when we celebrate Jesus death and resurrection. What I really want you to know about My Jesus is that He sacrificed himself for our sins, to allow us to be free. Jesus selfless sacrifice gives help and healing for mankind and especially me. Through prayer we have the chance to help and heal others at a much lower price than Jesus paid. God's love for humanity leads us to pray for ourselves and others in need of healing.

For My Jesus, prayer is powerful and effective. The efficacy of prayer should encourage us to use it more often.

**PRAYER:** Dear "My Jesus", Help us to understand that we are sinful and broken. We ask you to heal those we know and those we do not know who are in need of your healing. We know that prayer is both powerful and effective. We come to you to help us with the hurdles and struggles of life. It is only through your healing that we become whole. Encourage us to find ways to share your healing power with others. Amen.

## ***Wednesday, March 8***

**SCRIPTURE:** Jeremiah 17:14 (NRSVUE)

***<sup>14</sup>Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed;  
save me, and I shall be saved,  
for you are my praise.***

During the last couple weeks, my father was recently diagnosed with colon cancer. The news could be devastating for anyone. It is biting caustic that cancer happened to a genuinely kind and generous man. My Dad is, first and foremost, a proud Grandfather. Ask anyone, it's undeniable. He is, secondly, yet not lastly, a father who has taken the role seriously since day number one. Even as adults, we know the importance of our priority in his life. My Dad is also a loyal brother, son, and friend. I am proud to say that I get my sense of humor and positive outlook from him.

His life has been abrasively tarnished in the face of cancer. My heart is weary, and disrobes a heavy grayness as I approach each day. This fight he faces is in every thought and deed. Everyday and mindless activities are consumed with the thoughts of testing, treatments, financial responsibilities. I am uncertain why I have the need to pretend to be so strong for him. He knows my true heart. He knows this is heartbreaking for us as it is for him.

Yet I know that God has this burden in hand. I turn to Him. I surrender my tired spirit to Him for guidance, for strength, and for His peace.

**PRAYER:** Heavenly Father, who knows all things, from whom all good things come: I give the burden of this journey to you. The weight of this load is too heavy, and we cannot shoulder it alone. I entrust it to you.

My family seeks all things positively possible through science and medicine. And we thank you for making it possible for us to find hope and experience Your love. In Your name, we pray for peace in our hearts, and strength to do Your work. Amen.

***Thursday, March 9***

**SCRIPTURE:** John 6:40 (NRSVUE)

***This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day.***

When someone asked the question, “How do you know God is with you?” or “How do you know Jesus is present?” There is no right or wrong answer. It is different for everyone, yet similar at the same time. I personally have faced many times in life where I had reason to question these feelings. In the face of unbelievable loss, my brother, my grandparents, my young nephew, and yet I feel my faith is stronger for these losses. Many may question how this can be. As years go by and with them wisdom from life’s experiences, I have come to feel a comfort in knowing that Jesus and God the Father are in charge. Once this acceptance comes into your life you tend to feel more at peace with what is going on around you.

This is not to say that you should blindly accept injustices, tragedy, and horrible circumstances. It means that you must put your Faith in Christ that he is there with you, and it is His Will and the Will of the Father that are truly in control of the things around us.

These are trying times that we live in, however, since the dawn of time people, God’s children, have faced trying times. His own Son, Christ Jesus was not an exception to this. When you think about the Faith he had in his Father when he said, “Thy will be done”, it really makes you shutter. He gave his life so that we may be free. He is with you now and always, good times, bad time, and even when you doubt.

**PRAYER:** Lord, help us to find you in all situations. When we feel lost, afraid, happy, or sad, let us find you in our everyday life. Help us to remember you Son and all that he means to us. Help us to walk with him and remember the sacrifices he made so that each of us can be free to love the world as you love us. Amen.

## ***Friday, March 10***

**SCRIPTURE:** Matthew 11:28 (NRSVUE)

<sup>28</sup> ***“Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.***

This is a very familiar, oft quoted verse. Have you ever looked at something and seen it in a totally different way? Well, that’s what happened to me this year! It is easy to see what this verse says, but not as easy to see what it doesn’t.

All too often I think we look at the last word, “rest” and interpret it to mean the cure, total relief of all trials or pain. But, just as the word rest means, even in Hebrew or Greek, it is NOT the end.

When I was in graduate school, I was a Graduate Assistant. I worked at a radio station and lived off campus but within walking distance to the university and my job. In my second semester, I suffered a severe ankle injury resulting in surgery. My ankle was casted but very painful. I lived up two flights of stairs and my office was on the second floor with NO elevator.

I used to lay in bed crying in pain. If I took my pain pills, I couldn’t get up in the morning. If I didn’t, I couldn’t sleep. I cried out to God nightly to take away the pain. Why aren’t you taking it away, God? MAKE IT STOP! All of a sudden the answer was given to me. I was asking for the wrong thing. God never promised us an ***end*** to all our trials. As Matthew states, “He will give us rest”, and strength to endure; the ability to go on after some rest. When I stopped praying for the absence of pain and started to pray for just a bit of rest and strength to do what I had to, I found peace. Don’t box God into a corner and then cry out against Him because you didn’t get what you thought you needed! Let us open our hearts and minds to His will for us.

**PRAYER:** This Lent, let us learn to pray, “Thy will be done.”, Lord. Even Jesus on the cross asked if this cup could pass him by? And then said, “Not my will, but yours be done.” Amen.

## ***Saturday, March 11***

**SCRIPTURE:** Proverbs 16:24 (NRSVUE)

***Pleasant words are like a honeycomb,  
Sweetness to the soul and health to the body.***

“Pleasant words are like a honeycomb”. The word for pleasant here is the Hebrew word, noam. This word means something beautiful, pleasant, and delightful. It means to say something that creates delight in someone – yet the words do this because they are wise words as well. The word is also used figuratively of a shepherd’s staff and the comfort that it brings to the sheep as it guides them.

When we speak these pleasant words, we are speaking of God’s wisdom – but speaking it in a way that befits the term “honeycomb”. The idea here is that a wise man speaks his words of wisdom – but does so remembering that a harsh word stirs up anger, therefore he tries as often as possible to speak pleasant words as he offers the wisdom of God to others. This presents a wonderful picture of nature that points to the value of these pleasant words.

A honeycomb is a wonderful thing in the physical world. It is the place bees store their honey when they work gathering nectar from flowers around them. The honeycomb was considered the nectar of the gods by early Greeks because of all the healing properties that they found in it. It has a tremendous amount of anti-oxidants and can treat allergies. It is nature’s medicine. The blessing here is to the soul and health to the body. The bones in the body are the source of our blood supply, therefore seen as the very life force of the body. What we are told is that we become a blessing to others when we speak pleasant words to others. Such words will be a soul-healing thing to those who hear them. Just as honeycomb is healthy for our bodies...so pleasant words are health to our souls.

**PRAYER:** Gracious God, help us to speak pleasant words. May our words bring health and hope to all those with whom we interact and may our words be pleasing to you.

In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.

***Love – His Love is Strong***

March 12-18



## ***Monday, March 13***

**SCRIPTURE:** John 3:16-17 (NRSVUE)

***<sup>16</sup>"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.***

***<sup>17</sup>"Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him.***

John 3:16-17 are among the most revisited verses in the Bible, and for good reason. These verses remind us of the incredible love that God has for us. We are told that God willingly gave up his son out of love to pay the price for our sins. This verse reminds us of the ultimate sacrifice that God made for us through the death and resurrection of his son, Jesus.

The season of Lent is a time of reflection and it is important that we take the time to appreciate the love that God has for us. Lent has always been a time of sacrifice and self-reflection, and by focusing on the love God has shown us through the sacrifice of his son, we can gain comfort through knowing we are loved by God as well as a deeper understanding of the sacrifices we are called to make in our own lives.

As we reflect on the love that God has for us, we are also called to share that love with others. In verse 17, we are told that "God did NOT send the Son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be SAVED through him." In the same way, we are called by Jesus not to be judges, but to share his love with others; to show them the same grace and forgiveness that God has shown to us. Amidst the season of Lent, may we be reminded of the love that God has for all of us, and may we be moved to share that love with others.

**PRAYER:** Lord, we are in awe of your love for us, a love that is so great that you would give your own son to save us. We are grateful for the sacrifice Jesus made on the cross and the gift of eternal life that we have through him. Help us to grasp the depth of your love for us, and to live our lives in a way that reflects that love to others. In Jesus' name, Amen.

## ***Tuesday, March 14***

**SCRIPTURE:** Mark 10:20-22 (NRSVUE)

***20He said to him, "Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth." 21Jesus 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." 22When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.***

Today all forms of media bombard with suggestions of what should be purchased and possessed by everyone. Bigger, newer is better. Fashions change dramatically yearly. No one wants to be left behind or go without.

Jesus owned very little. He had the clothes on his back, sandals, a cloak, maybe a sturdy staff. Even for those times that was not very much. Jesus never condemned those who had more as shown by this verse. What he encouraged was for those in possession of great wealth to share their wealth with the less fortunate. It's never easy to give up present luxury for a promise of prosperity in the murky future. To the young man Jesus' words caused him shock. His choice was clear. Live well now or live well eternally.

Our choices are the same now as in Jesus' time. Today we struggle to even meet our promised tithes let alone sell everything we own and give the money to the poor. We lend our voices in prayer for each other. We pick an angel off the Christmas tree to give gifts to the poor. We fill boxes of food to feed the impoverished at Thanksgiving. Clothing and shoe drives help to dress the unsheltered. But there is still more to be done.

Through everything though Jesus never censures us. He looks at us lovingly and urges us to do better and to give more to help the downtrodden. As Jesus gave everything including his very life for us all we too can share his love with others.

And remember to always look for ways to share the love Jesus has for us with others.

**PRAYER:** Please Jesus continue to shower us with your love and to show us ways to help share you and your love with others. Help us to be generous to others with our physical and spiritual gifts we ask in your name. Amen.



## ***Wednesday, March 15***

**SCRIPTURE:** Joel 2:12-13 (NRSVUE)

***<sup>12</sup>Yet even now, says theLORD,  
return to me with all your heart,  
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;  
<sup>13</sup>rend your hearts and not your clothing.***

***Return to theLORDGod,  
for he is gracious and merciful,  
slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love,  
and relenting from punishment.***

Our lives sometimes feels as if they are full of sorrow, of darkness. We feel alone and lost and forget that God's love can change that. He loves us with no boundaries, no reserve and with no end.

He says come to me and give me your heart. God wants everything inside of it, especially our burdens. He accepts our sadness, our sins, our defeats, all our pain as His own.

This brings about the question of why me? Of all the billions of people in the world, why does God want my heart? My sorrows? When we love someone, we hate to see them sad, hurting, crying, suffering and how many times have any of us uttered the words, "I wish I could take away your pain, your sorrow." This is exactly what God is telling us. I love you and I don't want you to hurt.

Love is an extremely powerful emotion. It is comforting, supportive, makes us feel special and important. There is no limit or end to love. A parent never runs out of love no matter how many children he or she has. It just grows and grows. Nor can death stop it or end it either. Our loved ones may physically leave this world, but we still feel, carry, and have their love.

When we read God's words and think about our own relationships, we can truly see and feel how strong God's love is.

**PRAYER:** Dear Lord, our loving God, in my time of sorrow, of darkness, of hopelessness, I pray that You help me remember Your love and that by offering my heart to you, I will be comforted and feel secure.Amen.

## ***Thursday, March 16***

**SCRIPTURE:** John 13:1 (NRSVUE)

***Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.***

No one likes death Jesus knew he had to do what was best for everyone and would protect them at all costs. His love for them was overwhelming. Just as when one of our own relatives, friends, love ones is about to pass away, we hope that they are no longer in pain. One will not pass on and go to the father until they are ready too. Did you ever hear of a time when someone was on their death bed and would not pass over until someone gets there to say goodbye? When this happens, I feel that it brings closure to the love ones that are left here.

When I was younger and someone passed away, we had a big party after the funeral to celebrate their life. This was representative of the feast. I knew that they would be with God and they would be free of pain. Even though they are no longer here physically, I know that their spirit is always with us. Jesus' love for us did not end with his death on the cross. His love for us is never ending just as our love for our love for our relatives is. Jesus's' love lives within every one of us. His love is the purest love we know. He loves (loved) us to the end.

**PRAYER:** Dear Lord, please watch over me as I go about my life. Forgive me of my sins and give me peace to accept the things I can't change. Keep me safe from other people's action and choices. Show me your love so I can spread that to others. Please protect me as I go about my day. In Jesus's name I pray. Amen.

**PRAYER:** Dear God, thank you for all of your love and. Thank you especially for our salvation and eternity with You which was secured Jesus' death and resurrection. We just to trust believe. We thank you that can separate us from your love. I grateful to serve the only living and true God.

In Jesus name. Amen.

***Friday, March 17***

**SCRIPTURE: Romans 8:38-39 (NRSVUE)**

***<sup>38</sup>For I am For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup>nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.***

For those of us who have ever lost someone very special, and important in our lives, we understand grief and how devastating it can be. My beloved father kind, loving, fun and a supportive gentle man, whom I loved so much. When he passed, the grief was overwhelming.

The day before the funeral, our pastor attended the wake and prayed with all of us. He quoted today's Bible verse. As he started 'For I am convinced,...' the words became REAL to me. I had heard this scripture throughout my life, but this time was different. Even though I had prayed many times and asked God to cover individuals with His care, this felt like the first time I was actually 'entrusting' God with someone. My father no longer here on this earth...he was in God's hands in Heaven. I had to COMPLETELY trust Him.

The pastor prayed on, 'neither death nor life, neither angels nor rulers....NOTHING will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord'. Then the reality of the love and power of Jesus' really hit me. My father was not here, but he was WITH Jesus. It was Jesus who made it all possible. By being born as a man, dying on the cross and then rising from the dead, Jesus took our place and sealed our salvation and eternity. All we have to do is believe Him, accept His gift and trust in Him. His love a true miracle that we may not completely understand, but we don't have to understand it...we only to BELIEVE it. Jesus does all the rest.

***Saturday, March 18***

**SCRIPTURE; Psalm 100:5 (NRSVUE)**

***“For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever and his faithfulness to all generations.”***

My second semester of my junior year in college was difficult. I had classes in my major and an incomplete from the first semester. As the semester was coming to an end I was overwhelmed. I would wake up in the night unable to sleep. I was calling home at 4:00 or 5:00 am talking with my Dad. After many nights calling home my Dad said “If you fail we are still going to love you” That was all I needed to hear.

When we mess up, sin. Fail on a test or in a relationship that is what Jesus tells us,  
“I still love you!”

**PRAYER:**

Jesus, I love the words in Psalm 100. My steadfast loves endure forever. That is all I need to hear.

Amen.

Amen.

*Grace – His Grace is Free*

March 19-25



## ***Monday, March 20***

**SCRIPTURE: Romans 6:13b-14 (NRSVUE)**

***<sup>13</sup>present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life and present your members to God as instruments of righteousness.<sup>14</sup>For sin will have no dominion over you since you are not under law but under grace.***

Have you ever wondered what your life would be like without the knowledge and assurance that sin has no power over you? Our faith assures us that we are saved by God's grace. Martin Luther's theology reminds us that grace is a gift that we don't earn but is freely given to us out of love.

Let me tell you about my Jesus. As we prepare for Easter, it is a super time to remember God's gift to humanity. Jesus died on the cross and then rose from the dead to wash away our sinful nature and bring each of us to eternal life. In return we can read scripture and pray to bring us closer to our loving Heavenly Father.

My Jesus showed by example how to care for others. He healed the blind man, fed the hungry and prayed for those in need. I am proud to be a member of St. John's where outreach ministry is joyful and prevalent. Giving to those in need is part of our mission. Inflation has made a negative impact for many who are struggling to feed and clothe their families. The Thanksgiving, Turkey Boxes, the drive to refill the Emergency Food Pantry at Seneca Street, the Burrito Project, and Christmas gifts for the Gateway-Longview community are just a few examples of our response to God's gifts and inspire us to "Go and do likewise!"

Lent is a time for us to honestly look at our lives...how we spend our time, talent, and treasure. It's a golden opportunity to be thankful to God for our many blessings especially God's GRACE freely given.

**PRAYER:** Dearest Lord Jesus, as we prepare for Easter, help us to be mindful of your grace freely given. May our response be both faithful and grateful by "Paying It Forward."

In Your Holy Name we pray, Amen.

***Tuesday, March 21***

**SCRIPTURE:** 1 Peter 4:10 (NRSVUE)

***“Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.”***

When we are born, God blesses us with gifts that we are meant to develop and use to help and share with others. These can be any talent or ability one might have, large or small. We can bring each other a lot of joy and comfort by freely sharing our innate gifts.

I have always been able to connect with people artistically. I love to paint, draw, sing and play the piano. I have shared my gifts in this way by playing piano for my family and friends as well as for people I’ve never met such as those in nursing homes and coffee shops. I also make homemade artistic cards for my loved ones and others regularly.

God gave us the gifts we have for a deeper reason, to use them to better the lives of people around us and contribute to our community. God has also graced us with spiritual gifts like wisdom, faith and knowledge. Spiritual gifts allow us to fully believe in God and love others the way we are called to do. Every gift we possess is a reflection of God. When we serve others with what we’ve been given, we are also serving him. Personally, I am able to enjoy my gifts from God more when they are being shared with others, both near and far. They hold more value and it is so fulfilling when others are also receiving a benefit from them. In this way, I feel that all gifts received by us are being used in the way God intended.

**PRAYER:** Dear God, we thank you for the amazing gifts you have graced us with. Please help us to use these gifts to serve others and to make the world you have blessed us with an even better and loving place. Amen.

## ***Wednesday, March 22***

**SCRIPTURE:** Ephesians 2:8 (NRSVUE)

***<sup>8</sup>For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—***

“We all lived in the passions of our flesh following desires of our body and mind, and so we were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, even when we were dead through our trespass, made us alive together with Christ, and raised us with him.”

I find the translation and additional verses of this chapter in the Reader’s Digest Bible more powerful than our Good News translation, and I’d like to start by sharing the surrounding verses. “...not because of works, lest any man should boast, for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

This verse is famous, but many things are highlighted by its context; that we are naturally drawn into our ruts of sinful habit without Christ in our heart, that pride has no place in good works, and that our conscience calls within each of us to give ourselves more fully to what we know we should do.

In my experience the greatest changes have happened not by my action but through me, like a guest drawing hospitality from a host, and my most meaningful impacts have happened when I lost myself in what was happening. We do not know the invisible impact that living our truth has on those around us near or far.

**PRAYER:** Father, Thank you for your son who shone light on the path of self sacrifice in service of truth and love. Lead us directly to the obstacles which require our good work to overcome in Jesus name. Amen.



## ***Thursday, March 23***

**SCRIPTURE:** 2 Timothy 1:8b-9 (NRSV)

***...join with me in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God, who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace. This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began.***

Paul was a wretch of a man.. We can learn from his conversion, from his obedience to Jesus' calling even though he suffered greatly for the sake of the Good News of God's work of salvation. A gift freely given and freely received. Saul was a wretched sinner but he thought he was doing God right by hunting down and even killing those who became followers of Jesus.

Grace is a life giving gift. I imagine that Jesus had his eye on Saul from the foundations of the Earth. Who knows why Jesus calls certain people but Paul became a believer and a powerful preacher who tirelessly called out to whoever would listen to the amazing grace of Jesus.

I am calling to memory another wretched man, a licentious sinner and a disappointment to his father. He too suffered and his trials brought him to becoming a believer, a fruitful hymn writer, pastor and an abolitionist along with Wilberforce. When John Newton could no longer write because of his age he used his voice and just kept on preaching the Good News. His famous hymn, "Amazing Grace", I love to sing and often wonder why has God called me. I may never know, but I am glad God called. I am sure of this, child of God, the loving tear filled eye of God is on you, always has been, always will be. The voice of Jesus has been calling you; through the tears and suffering of Paul, the songs of Newton, a friend or maybe the words of these devotions. Maybe only recently you heard him, or has it been a long time since you've listened. Regardless, you are called (with a holy calling) to participate in the wonderful journey that takes a soul from wretched to saved.

**PRAYER:** Are you calling even me Lord? Help me to hear you above the noise of my world and follow you. Amen.

***Friday, March 24***

**SCRIPTURE: Titus 2:11 (NRSVUE)**

***For the grace of God has appeared,  
bringing salvation to all.***

God's grace translates into unconditional love for everyone, even when we do not behave in a manner he desires. Being that every human is imperfect, we are all guilty of sin. Yet God's love is so deep and encompassing that he offers redemption from death for every person, available because of the sacrifice of his son Jesus.

What stands out to me is that the ministry of Jesus was directed to all people. Despite being a Jew, he embraced gentiles, the poor, lepers, tax collectors, prostitutes and thieves. He fostered acceptance and inclusion. He demonstrated love and forgiveness

Each year as I follow the path of Jesus to the cross, it reinforces that Jesus teaches us a lesson of being kind to others whatever their sex, race, income status, creed, or sins of yesterday, today or tomorrow. My Jesus is inclusive, forgiving and tells us in the New Testament to love God with all your heart AND love your neighbor as yourself.

While my experiences of unacceptance has been rather benign as opposed to what others have experienced, it made me sensitive to this. My neighborhood and workplace is much more diverse these days and I make a point of welcoming others who are different from me in a way that MY JESUS showed me how to do.

**PRAYER:** Dear Jesus, great unifier, please help us to be your disciple in showing understanding and kindness to all people. Help us to foster peace and love in a world currently so divided. Amen.

***Saturday, March 25***

**SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 2:8 (NRSVUE)**

***<sup>a</sup>For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—***

How often in life do you take credit for all of your blessings? So often we take a look at our successes and credit it purely to our hard work and determination. Yes, we may have gone to school, we may have worked hard but let us not forget that we were loved and our lives were determined before we even took our first breath. God is our creator and he is our savior. When we are taught to put nothing else above our Lord and Savior - it is a lesson in humility and grace. Without our Lord's blessings, we would not have our life - for this we need to be eternally grateful. When you are out taking a walk, look at the beauty all around you - that is God's blessing. Being able to work at a job you love, touching the lives of so many people around you - that is God's love.

I am eternally grateful for all of my blessings. There is so much sadness all around us every day, which is an unfortunate aspect of life. However, we need not focus on the darkness - it is possible and beneficial to look for and focus on the light.

**PRAYER:** Thank you God for all of my blessings. I know your grace and love have led me to the life I have today. I do not always thank you Lord, however, let me take today to acknowledge that your love and grace have brought me to this place in my life. I am grateful for my life and I am grateful for your love and guidance.

In your name, Amen.

***Savior - He Saves the Sinner***

March 26 – April 1



## ***Monday, March 27***

**SCRIPTURE:** 1 Timothy 1:15 (NRSVUE)

***<sup>15</sup>The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance: that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the foremost.***

Have you ever wondered about this bible verse? Paul was referring to his life before he was a Christian.” A little history about the apostle Paul. He was born into a Jewish family in Tarsus. (today's Turkey). In his early life, he was known as Saul. Saul believed the teachings of Jesus violated The Law of Moses and tormented anyone who followed those teachings. On the road to Damascus **he believed he had heard the voice of the risen Jesus**. This led to his conversion where Saul became Paul. He stopped persecuting Christians and became a missionary for Christ.

Paul started more than a dozen churches. He is commonly considered the author of 13 books of the Bible. He played a significant role in spreading the gospel to the Gentiles (non-Jews) during the first century.

Just like Paul, we have our own fair share of sins that we know fall short of God’s holiness. God gave us his word through writers of the Bible and healed us by his salvation. Paul was an example of humility. He wrote, “I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. I am content with...hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor. 12:9-10)

Paul recognized and exemplified that sometimes the darkest times in our lives are opportunities for God’s work to shine through us. Jesus shows himself in the trials we see people enduring and reminds us that through Him we can endure. *In God’s Kingdom we are all saints* who commit different kinds of sins, but we are still saints!

**PRAYER:** Dear Father, We are here on this broken earth. We take comfort in knowing that Jesus died on the cross for our salvation. Jesus, my redeemer, you are like a lighthouse on a dark and dreary night. When our bodies are weak from trials of life. Jesus, you show yourself in other people. Remind us that we are made in your image yet we all are sinners needing your forgiveness. We know life with you is our future. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

***Tuesday, March 28***

**SCRIPTURE:** Luke 5:32 (NRSVUE)

***Jesus answered them...“I have not come to  
call the righteous but sinners to repentance”***

Charlotte Elliot grew up in England. She was a prolific artist and writer who suffered a serious illness when she was 32 that left her an invalid and depressed. She was confined to her home, unable to attend worship. A preacher from Switzerland came to visit her and asked her if she had peace with God. This question brought her face to face with her many inner struggles and made her feel useless. A few days later she was able to talk with him again and said that she wanted to clean up her life before she became a Christian. The preacher, Dr. Cesar Malan, answered, “Come just as you are”. She gave her life to Jesus that day. Later, in 1835, at 45 years old, she pondered that day and penned the words to the well-known Hymn, “*Just As I Am*”.

The verses cry out to our inability to make right the chaos that rages in our souls. Tossed about with conflicts and doubt, fighting and fears within and without. Our deep desire to rid our souls of the “dark blot” is on our own impossible. In her wretched condition she saw that all she needed was Christ, and particularly the blood he shed freely to save the wretches like her, like me, and if you are feeling broken, like you too. There is a point where we become so broken that we know we need a savior. That is why he comes to us. He bids us come, just as we are. Jesus will receive us, just come.

She wrote on, Jesus will welcome, pardon, cleanse and relieve. He has been cleansing from the beginning, first his disciples, then the multitudes, then at the cross all creation. He welcomes still today, with a love that breaks down all barriers. His promise alone is to bring us salvation.

Perhaps today we can come to realize that we are sinners in need of a savior. That we can give up the fight we have fought of independence from God and allow Christ’s blood to make us whole.

**PRAYER:** Lord Jesus cleanse me and make me righteous in your sight for I am a sinner in need of your salvation. Help me come to you just as I am. Amen.

***Wednesday, March 29***

**SCRIPTURE: Titus 3:5 (NRSVUE)**

***He saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.***

What draws me to the Lutheran Faith is knowing as Martin Luther propounded “that humans may reach salvation only by their Faith and not by their deeds.” (Also he really liked beer.)

Doing good works is what I do. I am a feeler, a soft soul; good works is just inbred in me. From when I was a young girl and I would save the worms on the side walk after a rainy night on my way to the school bus stop. I would sit next to the lonely kid at lunch or on the school bus. I would try to make friends with the friendless. I never saw these acts of compassion as righteousness especially since I’m not even sure what righteousness means. People often say I am a good person, I don’t know about that, I can be selfish, I can lash out at loved ones. I don’t always fulfill my commitments. I try to be a good person but don’t truly feel like one. I do try to start each day with Love in my heart and to forgive, including forgiving myself. I know God has already forgiven me. Oh I haven’t done terrible, immoral things; I just don’t do All that I can, in my opinion. Most of all I have trouble forgiving.

So I will continue to be “a good person” everyday no matter how others treat me, because that is who I am, the way God made me. My human side makes me not perfect that’s where Grace comes in (last week’s topic). Leaning on God and following Jesus’ many examples on how to Love ,how to Forgive even how to “ Shake the dust off your feet” and move on is how I do it.

Let me tell you about my Jesus: Ain’t no sinner that he can’t save.

**PRAYER:** Heavenly Father: Thank you for Christian song artist their words lift me up and carry me thru the days I have trouble with. Thank you for the opportunity to serve others, it is truly where the JOY is.” Jesus, Others, Yourself” Amen

***Thursday, March 30***

**SCRIPTURE: Romans 5:8 (NRSVUE)**

***But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.***

How much are you willing to suffer for the people you love? Are you willing to sit through a five hour dance recital? Are you willing to eat Grandma's famous liver and onions? Are you willing to give a blood, bone marrow, or organ donation?

What would determine your willingness to suffer? Is it the degree of closeness you feel, or the perceived worthiness of the recipient, or some other criteria? Would you be willing to pay to save your life? If you were kidnapped, how much ransom would you be willing to pay? How many lifestyle changes are you willing to embrace to improve your chance at a longer life? Will you give up your addictions to lengthen your life? What price are you willing to pay to save your life?

Jesus freely suffered and died to save us. His death and suffering save us from the consequences of our sin. The verses just before Romans 5:8 ask about the ability of someone to die for a righteous person, or maybe even for a good person, but Jesus was willing to die for you and me, sinful though we are.

It is not easy not to sin. Even the best, most saintly people fail at being sin free. We are all sinners and so we all caused Jesus to suffer and die. He freely took on suffering and death to save you and me. Are we worth it? Do we meet some special criteria to be saved? As Anne Wilson says in her song "My Jesus", who would care that much for me?" Of course the answer is Jesus, our Savior, who with unimaginable love save us from our sin!

**PRAYER:** Dear Jesus, you love me so much that you died to save me from my sins. Help me every day to try to be worthy of that sacrifice. Amen



## ***Friday, March 31***

**SCRIPTURE:** Mark 2:17 (NRSVUE)

***<sup>17</sup>When Jesus heard this, he said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician but those who are sick; I have not come to call the righteous but sinners.”***

I spent many years working in a highly specialized, single specialty oncology practice. Occasionally we would have non-oncology patients calling demanding to be seen when they had no oncologic issues. The staff would often become frustrated as appointment times were limited and it would be difficult to coordinate appointments for the cancer patients to coincide with their chemotherapy treatments. But the physicians never wanted to turn anyone away regardless of their complaint. Sadly, we also experienced patients presenting with such advanced disease that it became nearly impossible to treat them successfully. When asked why they waited so long to seek treatment, often the answer was fear. They knew something wasn't right but were too afraid to see a physician.

I wonder if Jesus ever feels frustration when we do not seek Him out, perhaps out of fear? Fear of being turned away, fear of being judged or just not knowing who He is. Jesus has been given the titles of Healer, Teacher, Shepherd, Savior. What exactly is a Savior? Simply put, a savior is someone who saves other. Savior perfectly describes Jesus as his mission is to save sinners from themselves. When life becomes overwhelming, He shows a path to follow. Whether we listen is debatable. His way may not be the way we think we should go but ultimately, He leads us where we need to be. As Christians, we are called to lead others back to Him without judgement and He will heal the broken and forgive the sinners. Because of this death and resurrection anyone who believes in Him will have eternal life.

**PRAYER:** Lord, by your death and resurrection you have saved us. Let us never forget your sacrifices to give us eternal life. For this we thank you, Amen.

## ***Saturday, April 1***

**SCRIPTURE:** Romans 3:22b-23 (NRSVUE)

***For there is no distinction,<sup>23</sup> since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; He saves the sinner since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.***

When we sit in church on a Sunday morning and look around at our fellow parishioners and worshippers the last thought that would come to our minds is that we are looking at a gathering of sinners. We love our fellow parishioners and the many wonderful things they do to serve God, their congregation and their community. They share their time, talents, finances, their food, clothes and all of the many blessings they have received.

So then how could such loving and caring Christians be considered sinners? Well the answer is found in the fact that we are human beings, which means that we will never be perfect. Perfection as a human being is not part of the conversation.

For most of us, when we think of sinners we think of the many big and bad things that happen in the world around us such as murders, assaults, robberies, wars, drug use, cheating, lying, and the list goes on and on almost endlessly.

I assume most of you have seen or heard of sins that have occurred in your life or at least near you and/or a family member or friends. So as Christians sinning does not include the big and bad things mentioned above. So as Christians sinning comes from being human, which means we are not perfect. There may be times we could help someone, serve a charity, make a donation, help a friend, help at church but for some reason we fail to do God's will. And there may be times we say or do something that hurts someone's feelings.

So our sins could be summarized as failing to " Love God and Share Christ's Love With All" every chance that we get! So keep your eyes and hearts open because more opportunities are coming to serve God and Share Christ's Love with all!!

**PRAYER:** Dear Lord: Please guide us and help us to share Christ's love with all in everything we do and with every opportunity that we are presented with.  
In your name we pray. Amen.

***Lord - He Has Risen from Death***

April 2-8



## ***Tuesday, April 4***

**SCRIPTURE: Colossians 2:12 (NRSVUE)**

***When you were buried with him in baptism you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.***

The apostle Paul spread the gospel around the Northeastern Mediterranean, primarily in cities and towns we now call Turkey. Colossae was one of these. He had founded a small group of believers there. One of the ways he kept in touch with these fledgling church communities was to remind them of the good news he had shared with them through “epistles” or letters which were read when the believers gathered together.

In the above verse Paul reminds them that their baptism, was like being buried with Christ, in that their old, sinful self was buried. And because of faith in the power of God they were reborn, like Christ rising from the dead, (“born again”) to a new life. Even though they were dead in their transgressions he, made them alive with him, forgiving all their sins.

What does this new life promise? It means we are no longer a slave to the base lusts and cravings of this world; instead, we hunger to live righteously. It means to comfort the discouraged, to help the weak, to be patient to all. To rejoice in the knowledge that you have been reclaimed from this world through the price of the cross. We should constantly be mindful of our new life, and in everything give thanks. For this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus. Let the Holy Spirit, guide your steps and be your counselor in examining all things; holding fast to what is good and eschewing everything that is evil.

Paul ends this letter with a blessing: May the God make you completely holy and may your soul and body be kept entirely blameless through your faith at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**PRAYER:** Let us hold fast to the knowledge of the priceless gift we have been given freely by God, which is our belief in our Lord Jesus Christ, who died so that we are justified in the eyes of God. Let this good news enrich our lives to the service of others. May the Holy Spirit guide our steps in our dealings, hardships, and celebrations. We humbly ask these things in the name of our savior and redeemer, Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

## ***Wednesday, April 5***

**SCRIPTURE:** Psalm 147:4-5 (NRSVUE)

***He determines the number of the stars;***

***he gives to all of them their names.***

***Great is our Lord and abundant in power;***

***his understanding is beyond measure.***

A couple of years ago, my husband and I, along with his brother and our sister-in-law, traveled throughout portions of the American Southwest. Our goal was to visit national parks, especially the Grand Canyon, Bryce Canyon, and Zion, as well as local points of interest. One of our side trips involved driving to Utah's Coral Pink Sands State Park, a place well-known for its spectacular stargazing. As the sky became progressively darker, more stars than I have ever seen, filled the heavens. The view of the evening sky was awe-inspiring, and the immensity of the universe immediately apparent. That God had created this amazing display attests to his greatness and power. Surely this almighty power was employed to raise Jesus from the dead.

**PRAYER:** Dear Lord Jesus Christ help us to see  
in your creations your immense power, power  
sufficient to raise us from the dead. Amen.

## ***Maundy Thursday, April 6***

**SCRIPTURE:** I Corinthians 1:18 (NRSVUE)

***For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.***

I closed my eyes, switched the two papers back and forth and picked one. And got LORD – He has risen from death.

I so understand Paul's words about foolishness. But isn't that the first thought to have. I can understand and accept the gospels' messages, miracles and teachings, and then I am suddenly up against "risen from the dead".

In today's world people are revived all the time from the brink of death. But only with today's modern means of doing so. Nothing like this existed in Jesus' time. And he was badly beaten and died on the cross – the cruelest, most brutal way the ancient world could devise. And on the third day he rose and afterward appeared to many.

My way of dealing with this is to go to Acts and read of those who were alive during this event. And the power and faith they experienced as they witnessed to the risen Lord. As I read of their actions my own faith is strengthened to trust that it is true. He has risen from death.

So now what? How can I experience the power of God in my life? Everything points to the need to freely give myself, all of me, to this Lord. I thought I had done that many years ago, but it seems that bit by bit I have taken back what I once gave to the Lord.

For the past few weeks, I have been saying a prayer that speaks deeply to me now. It is not my prayer but a prayer of Ignatius of Loyola.

**PRAYER:** Take, Lord, all my liberty, my memory and my whole will. You have given me all that I have, all that I am, and I surrender all to Your Divine will. You have given me all that I have, all that I am, and I surrender all to Your Divine will. Give me only your love and your grace. With this I am rich enough, and I have no more to ask. Amen.

## ***GOOD FRIDAY, April 7***

**SCRIPTURE:** Ephesians 3:20

***Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine,***

“Lordy, Lordy” my grandma used to say when she was surprised at something, maybe even amazed. “Really,” she would ask. “Is that true?”

I don’t know about you, but that’s often what I ask when I think about the life and mission of Jesus. Is he really all these names we call him: Shepherd, Teacher, Healer...? And LORD! What does that mean anyway? Well, as the song writer said, **“Let me tell you ‘bout my Jesus”**

Not only is he all these names we give him as he walks with us through life, but, yes, he is LORD even over death! St. Paul tells us clearly that Jesus not only gave up his life for us on that gruesome cross in order that we might live forever in heaven, but more than that, he fills us with power to do far more than we can ever ask or imagine while we still live on earth. Really? Power to do more than I can even think of or imagine? Here in West Seneca or Elma or wherever I live? Come on, he is Lord and I’m just me! I don’t feel very powerful at all! How can I do anything for him that is really significant? Well, **“Let me tell you ‘bout my Jesus”**

**PRAYER:** Lord, you have given me power to do unimaginable things in your name. Help me in my weakness to believe that. You gave your life for mine. Help me to live it fully. Amen.

## ***Saturday, April 8***

**SCRIPTURE: Matthew 19:26 (NRSVUE)**

***But Jesus looked at them and said, “For mortals it is impossible, but for God all things are possible.”***

We mortals often think that we can save ourselves through our own “good works.” We know that Jesus died for our sins but we often act as if *WE* control how we will enter into salvation and the Kingdom of God. Matthew reminds us that for mortals this is impossible and that we need God to achieve eternal life. Salvation comes only by the grace of God which is His to give because He is all powerful and all things are possible for Him.

Because we know in our hearts that this is true, we often justify doing something wrong because God is a loving and forgiving God. The rich young man wanted to follow Christ but felt he was being asked to give up the wealth that made him so comfortable. Jesus said that it would be hard for this young man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. He did not say it would be impossible, just hard. God could have shown him the way. Do we not often put our wants and pleasures first? Then we ask God to help us get that for which we pray. He wants to help us achieve success but He also sometimes allows us to suffer disappointment because what we want may not be God’s will for us. We have often heard that one answer to our prayers may be a definite *NO or Not Yet*. God’s love and guidance is always there for us. We need to ask ourselves if what we are doing is for our own benefit or are we following God’s directions. Are we using our time, energy and resources to help others in God’s name? Remember, our salvation comes only by the grace of God. We cannot save ourselves but need to rely on Christ’s guidance and God’s will. God will always be there for us.

**PRAYER:** Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for making all things possible for us and our world. Help us to remember to look to you for grace and guidance to achieve your goals for us. Glory be to you and your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.



## **EASTER SUNDAY, April 9, 2023**

***This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day.***

***John 6:40*** (NRSVUE)

On that first Easter morning, the world changed with the good news that God does have the last word, that death is not the end.

Let Jesus change your life and your way of thinking. This is the time to put your fears to the side and become the person God wants you to be. And yes, you are exactly what Jesus wants.

God is not looking for the best qualifications, best ability, best charisma, best prospects, not that God would turn them down, because it is true that most of the gifted people in our society have also been some of God's most faithful, best servants. But that's a coincidence, not a requirement. I believe that God knows that the vast majority of men and women fall into the "I'm" only category. It was from the raw material of the average and the ordinary that Jesus made his church with the average Joes and Janes of this world. "I'm only" is exactly what God wants.

As a popular saying going around on FACEBOOK says: God doesn't call the qualified; God qualifies the called." Let Jesus take you by the hand and lead you into a joyous life.

**He is Risen! Alleluia!**

**He is Risen indeed!**

# LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT MY JESUS

S	L	E	N	T	L	C	H	I	H	S	N	D	L
R	U	M	A	N	O	S	L	I	W	E	N	N	A
W	E	S	G	H	V	L	P	R	D	V	A	L	R
E	S	H	E	T	E	J	H	R	I	A	O	V	N
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L	G	R	A	C	E	P	M	A	N	C	O	P	U
D	Q	L	R	S	T	U	H	I	V	A	W	X	O
Y	R	Z	O	A	B	C	W	E	A	R	Y	C	J
D	R	O	I	V	A	S	E	F	R	G	G	H	I
J	K	L	L	L	E	T	M	N	O	D	R	O	L

ANNE WILSON	HEAVY	SAVES
BURDEN	JOURNEY	SAVIOR
CHANGES	LENT	SHEPHERD
EMPTY	LORD (2)	STRONG
FREE	LOVE (2)	TEACHER
GRACE (2)	MY JESUS	TELL
HEALER	RISEN	WEARY

(2 Grace, Love and Lord — you can never have enough of these)

