

# WHAT DOES THE LORD REQUIRE OF YOU?

Micah 6:8

✓ **FEAR** the Lord your God

✓ **SERVE** God with all your heart and soul

✓ **FOLLOW** in all His ways

✓ love **KINDNESS**

✓ act **JUSTLY**

✓ walk **HUMBLY** with your God

✓ **LOVE** God

**2024 LENTEN DEVOTIONAL**

*Long ago the word Lent was used to identify the time of year when the light of day began to lengthen. The season of Lent in our church year marks a time when we lengthen or increase our knowledge and understanding about God and the depth of His love through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, the Light of the World. During these forty days, we have an opportunity to reflect, meditate, and grow spiritually. It is a time to renew our relationship with God and nurture our spirituality.*

## WHAT DOES GOD REQUIRE OF US?



Jesus was sent by God to face the ultimate requirement of willingly laying down his life as payment for our everlasting life. In a similar manner, we are shown by God, by his followers, and through scripture to act in a way that is shown by Jesus.

The weekly topics chosen are: **FEAR** the Lord your God, **SERVE** God with all your heart and soul, **FOLLOW** in all His ways, to love **KINDNESS**, to act **JUSTLY**, to walk **HUMBLY** with your God, and to **LOVE** God.

The goal of the 2024 Lenten Devotional is to remind us that while God willingly helps and guides us, we are also called to walk as disciples in the footsteps of Jesus. In this Lenten season, let us be reminded of behaviors that Jesus expects of us. Let us make a conscious effort to live more in his likeness not just during Lent, but all year long.

*As the church does not include Sundays in the forty days of Lent, the first day of each week is used to introduce the weekly subject. This also affords an opportunity for individuals and/or families to reflect on the many blessings for which we are thankful. Be sure to check out the activity pages found in the devotional*

*We pray that your personal Lenten journey  
will be marled by thee example and presence of Christ.*

# WHAT DOES THE LORD REQUIRE OF YOU?



**Lent 2024**

# FEAR-

The Lord your God



February 14-17



Ash Wednesday, February 14

**SCRIPTURE: Isaiah 50:10 (NRSVUE)**

Who among you fears the LORD?  
who obeys the voice of His Servant?  
who walks in darkness and has no light?  
let him trust in the name of the LORD  
and rely upon his God.

You may have heard that those three words summarize all of scripture. Or you may have heard that some version of those words - be not afraid, fear not, do not worry - appear at least 365 times in the Bible, one for every day of the year. God in the burning bush told Moses not to be afraid. The angel Gabriel told the Virgin Mary not to be afraid. Little wonder God urges us not to fear, when we consider the disastrous choices fearful people make. George Zimmerman said it was out of fear he shot and killed Travon Martin. Andrew Lester said it was out of fear he shot 16-year-old Ralph Yarl just for ringing his doorbell. Kevin Monahan said it was out of fear he shot 20-year-old Kaylin Gillis in the head just for turning around in his driveway. So if nothing good comes of fear, why should we have fear of the Lord?

I wonder if the fear of the Lord might be the antidote to those other, destructive fears. After all, fear is a physiological phenomenon. As much as we might want to, we can't just decide to lower our heart rate or stop our knees knocking and palms sweating when something overwhelms us.

We can't help how we feel. But we can decide how we respond to those feelings. Remembering that God is infinitely more awesome than any danger we might perceive or imagine, gives our natural, biological fear a safe space. Knowing that the most inconceivably fearsome power loves us, we can acknowledge our fear and sit with it, without reacting. With our fear in the Lord, we can walk confidently in the dark.

**PRAYER:** Unknowable, uncontainable, insurmountable God, I surrender all my fears and worries to you. Speak your strength to my trembling heart; in the darkness, in the storm, in every unsure step I take. Amen.

Thursday, February 15

**SCRIPTURE:** Job 28:28 (NRSVUE)

**"And he said to humankind, 'Truly, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.' "**

The Bible tells us to seek wisdom. But where to start? School, books, our elders? So many choices. True wisdom begins with God and as the relationship grows, so does wisdom. We receive it bumping shoulders with others, in the mundane events of daily life, even in what is called "street smarts." It is not something that we retrieve from a computer. Rather, wisdom is concerned with how we relate to others, to the world and to God. And so we begin with the Bible, where the Psalmist writes: "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."

And in I Kings, when God asks Solomon what he desires most, his answer: wisdom. As King Solomon rules, he becomes known for his wisdom.

In this Lenten journey, let us resolve to seek wisdom and understanding as we walk with God, in our prayer, in our worship, in our communities of faith.

**PRAYER:** Let us pray the prayer attributed to theologian Reinhold Niebuhr:

"God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. Living one day at a time, enjoying one moment at a time, accepting hardship as the pathway to peace; taking, as [Jesus] did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it; trusting that he will make all things right if I surrender to his will; that I may be reasonably happy in this life and supremely happy with him forever in the next." Amen.

Friday, February 16

**SCRIPTURE: Deuteronomy 10:12 (NRSVUE)**

**“So now, O Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you? Only to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.”**

This verse is given in speech where Moses has just received the 10 commandments for a second time near the end of the 40 years in the desert. These people knew the wrath of god after breaking the commandments and turning from god to their bull idol. Here Moses distilled the attitude around the commandments, and goes on in the next verse to say that they are given for our benefit.

This verse can appear contradictory. Although fearing and loving the same thing can, perhaps, be possible it seems to be an unreasonable attitude to hold for the King of kings. Terror or dread is unbefitting our Father in heaven. However there are types of “fear” which would fit well alongside service, obedience and love.

With respect there is within it a degree of fear acknowledging the subject's power. The type of respect you would have for a capable fighter. Fighters are often incredibly kind and controlled, but their ability can elicit a certain kind of tension. The aura of a judge is not one of dread, especially for the jury, but it is still intimidating. The best example might be seeing a police car on the road. There is always at least a drop of fear seeing them. We all speed like we all sin, regularly and within reason.

**PRAYER:** Let us remember that the commandments were given to us for our benefit, to deliver us from evil. And, let us not forget the wrath that befell those who strayed too far from the way of the Lord. May we serve others with all our might and give glory to our Father in heaven. Amen.

Saturday, February 17

**SCRIPTURE:** Romans 12:19 (NRSVUE)

**Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, says the Lord."**

What is it exactly to fear the Lord? As a child in Sunday school, the image I had of God was of an all-powerful being that could fill me with terror without much effort. This meaning of fear is present throughout the Bible in so many places, especially in the Old Testament. Lot's wife being turned into a pillar of salt comes to mind, but so does the image of shepherds watching their flocks by night when an angel of the Lord appears to them.

But, according to a website I found ([gotquestions.org](http://gotquestions.org)), fear has more to do with inspiring awe, reverence, and wonder. I like this version much better. Another website, [israelu.org](http://israelu.org), refers to the word "yihra," the Hebrew word for fear that was originally used in the Bible. The meaning is the same, being overcome by feelings of amazement. To experience fear in this way leads to the attainment of wisdom, and wisdom leads to trusting wholeheartedly that the Lord will provide. If we trust in the Lord, then he will mete out justice for the wrongs committed against us. Additionally, if we are not vengeful, then the health and welfare of the Christian community is improved as well.

**PRAYER:** Dear Lord, help us to trust fully in you, to react justly to any evils committed against us and to recognize your awesome power. Amen.

# SERVE-

God with all your heart  
and soul



February 18-24

Monday, February 19

**SCRIPTURE: Matthew 6:24 (NRSVUE)**

**No one can serve two masters, for a slave will either hate the one and love the other or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.**

Lately I can't help but wonder what is happening in our world. Those who are rich aren't satisfied and do everything in their power to get more wealth. Yet we have people in our country who don't have a roof over their head or enough food to eat. Does this seem wrong to anyone but me? Yet these same people who strive for more wealth and turn their eyes away from those who are so needy, claim to be Christians! Many of these people are people in power, in Congress, head of companies, and yes, even on the Supreme Court!

As believers, we know that you can't be both - you can't worship money/wealth and be a true Christian. Personally I get a warm & fuzzy feeling in worshipping the Lord with my heart and soul. I really can't comprehend the "need" to have more - more money, bigger house, more expensive car, etc. I am happy that I have a car that runs and a house that keeps me warm and knowing I have a Lord that loves me and has forgiven my sins.

Our Lord is all powerful and the day is coming when we all will have to face those pearly gates and be judged. Do these people think they can take their wealth with them? Drive up to the pearly gates in that big, new car? If so, they have a rude awakening coming!

As for me and my house, we prefer to serve the Lord - in any way we can. I would rather give to others less fortunate than be seen driving that big car!

**PRAYER:** Lord, we ask your forgiveness when we too often forget the difference between what we need and what we want. Help us to love our neighbor, help others less fortunate and bring more people into your kingdom. Guide our hearts and our love toward You! Amen.

Tuesday, February 20

**SCRIPTURE:** John 21:15 (NRSVUE)

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs."

John Chapter 21 is the third time Jesus appears to 7 of his disciples after he was raised from the dead. Verse 15 is the first of three times Jesus asks Peter if he loves him. Each time Peter says, "you know that I love you" and after each response by Peter, Jesus gives Peter a command: "Feed my lambs, Tend my sheep, and Feed my sheep." In this conversation, Jesus is charging Peter with continuing the work Jesus has started, which is shepherding his people.

Like Peter and the rest of the disciples, we as Christians are charged by Jesus to feed his lambs. Feed does not only mean to provide food, but also to offer support, compassion, love, and respect to our neighbors. Neighbors are not only the people who live on our street, but all individuals we come in contact with, either directly or indirectly. Just a simple smile while passing on the street or in the store; saying "hello" or "have a good day," or opening a door for someone, will go a long way to make their day brighter.

Our church also has several ministries that support our neighbors, such as the Burrito Project, the Community Dinner, Seneca Street UMC food pantry, and the West Seneca food pantry. All of these ministries can use our support either through donations or volunteering our skills and talents. These actions that we can take to help our neighbors is like Feeding Jesus' lambs, and making their days brighter and ours also.

**PRAYER:** Lord, help us to Feed Your Lambs, by providing support, compassion, love, and respect daily as we interact with our fellow neighbors.

In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Wednesday, February 21

**SCRIPTURE: Galatians 5:13 (NRSVUE)**

**For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters, only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become enslaved to one another.**

In this country we are blessed with more freedoms than many other people around the world. In addition to those guaranteed in the Bill of Rights, we can do a great number of things any way we wish to do them. We can earn money in hundreds of different ways, and we can spend it in hundreds of different ways. We can live in almost any area that we want, get married or not, have children or not, share some of the many blessings that we have received with those in need or not. Not only do we have this level of freedom on a societal level; but God has given us the freedom of choice as well. Although we know, through the teachings of Jesus, how God wants us to act and what things he wants us to do, we are not enslaved to God's will. We don't have to pray or worship or follow the Ten Commandments. We don't have to care about people or care for them. We have the option to do what we want, and how we want to do it.

Often we don't even consider that we are making decisions on how we should follow God's word. We just coast along as life leads us. A long time ago I learned that to not make a decision is a decision. If we fail to consider how our thoughts and actions might mesh with what God would have us do, then we have decided to not decide.

In this verse, Paul reminds the Galatians and us that we should make conscious decisions to serve one another. The decision is not made for us. Each one of us has to make it by ourselves. Will I help the hungry and poor? Will I console and befriend the bereaved? Will I be a slave to one another?

**PRAYER:** God, be by my side as I walk through life. Help me to have patience, understanding and empathy for my brothers and sisters in Christ. Guide me as I decide how to best use the talents and blessings that I have to be a servant. Amen.



Thursday, February 22

**SCRIPTURE: Colossians 3:23-24 (NRSVUE)**

**Whatever task you must do, work as if your soul depends on it, as for the Lord and not for humans, since you know that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward; you serve the Lord Christ.**

I think a lot of us serve the Lord but we don't realize it. Do you volunteer at a clothes or food pantry? I think you are serving the Lord. As a people we for the most part help people when we are asked. Without knowing, we are serving the Lord.

My church council voted me to be their president. I have never had a position of such importance in my working life. Will I be able to serve the Lord successfully? This is a difficult year for us because we had to let our secretary go and our pastor retired. Could I guide our council to determine all the things we need to do to continue to have our worship services? Could I communicate to our congregation the things we are doing to assure our continued success and relieve any anxiety? I prayed for guidance a lot during those days. God provided that guidance in many ways. When I started my term the mood was dark in our church we were arguing and not welcoming. As I am coming to the end of my term, I can see the light in the church coming back and the congregation is happier and welcoming again. God showed me the way to help our congregation. When we serve the Lord it makes us happier and more fulfilled in our lives. That's the reward that God gives us.

**PRAYER:** Merciful God help us to see the needs of our neighbors. Encourage us as we try to help others and our community. Help us to know how to serve you in this way. Amen.

Friday, February 23

**SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 2:10 (NRSVUE)**

**For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.**

Having been brought up in a belief system that emphasized works over faith, and being a very competitive young person when it came to being perceived as a good person, I can honestly say I was always "ruthlessly good." I was always looking for those accolades that would make me feel that I had worth and value, but my heart was becoming hard. I was sinking fast, but I was seeking even harder.

Slowly I've began to realize that God had freed me from feeling like I HAD to be good. I WANTED to be good, and to do good works to honor the God who was so gracious to me. "Serve" was no longer a dirty word, but a "love word". Overtime, I realized He had redeemed my whole life, even when I was doing "good works" with a wrong and selfish motive. He had built into me, the gift of service, and so I had served through my life, and those works were redeemed by Him.

This verse also speaks of the fact that we were each uniquely created. For everyone who suffers thinking that they are nothing or they are worthless, I just want with all my heart for them to understand how priceless they are. God fashioned each one of us, one by one for a PURPOSE.

Also, God knows the end from the beginning. He prepared those good works in advance for us, for me. So, even while I was trying to satisfy my need for God in a way that would never satisfy, He had ordained, nonetheless, that I would be caring for people who needed to be listened to, to be held, and to be told that they mattered. Even though it took me 35 years to find my way, He had fashioned and guided me to a place where I could serve.

**PRAYER:** Jesus, my Great God and Savior, may my heart overflow with Your Compassion for my fellow man. Show me where I am needed, and keep me mindful of the need to pray and seek Your Guidance to serve well. I am so grateful for every breathe, every heartbeat. Please move me to use those gifts for Your Glory. Amen.

Saturday, February 24

**SCRIPTURE: Luke 10:41-42 (NRSVUE)**

**But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things, but few things are needed - indeed only one. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her."**

This passage has always been one of favorites. You may ask Why? Because I am Martha. I have never been able to just sit at a family gathering. I spend days ahead of an event, cooking and cleaning. By the day of the event I'm exhausted and starting to get cranky because I want everything to be perfect for my guests. I'm sure I'm not alone in this behavior, but is it really all necessary?

We learn in this passage that Jesus has come to visit and teach but Martha quickly becomes frustrated with her sister Mary because Mary isn't helping her. After all, everything had to be perfect for Jesus. However, when Martha complains to Jesus, He gently chastises Martha. He wants Martha to get the same things out of His visit that Mary is. Mary wasn't interested in preparing special dishes; she just wanted to listen to what Jesus had to say. This is not to say that Mary was a better person. Martha appeared to be a take charge person, the type of person who would immediately rush to a sick friend's side and make sure any event she was hosting would be well done with her guests well taken care of. This is not to say Martha was a better person. Both women had considerable strengths and I believe complimented each other. Both were also women of great faith and devoted followers of Jesus, but had different ways of showing it.

We all can become distracted by creating the perfect meal or the perfect home. Although there is not necessarily anything wrong with this, it is taking away from what is really important. During this Lenten season, perhaps we all can take some time away from our daily distractions and spend more time just listening to what Jesus is trying to tell us.

**PRAYER:** Lord, give us the strength to prioritize what is important and learn to become better listeners so that we may share your teachings through our actions. Amen.

# FOLLOW—

In all HIS ways



Take up your  
*Cross*  
and follow me

February 25– March 2

Monday, February 26

**SCRIPTURE:** John's 8:12 (NRSVUE)

Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life."

I remember one night as a child, waking up from a nightmare. My heart raced, and fear gripped me as I struggled to regain my bearings. In the darkness of my room, I felt disoriented, unsure of what was real and what was just a figment of my imagination. As my eyes slowly adjusted, the shadows seemed to dance around me menacingly.

In desperation, I called out to my mother (dad worked nights), and within moments, she was there. She switched on the light, and immediately, the darkness retreated. The once terrifying shadows vanished, replaced by the familiar and comforting objects of my room. My mother's presence reassured me that I was safe, and the light helped me regain my sense of reality.

Just as the light dispelled the darkness and fear in my room that night, Jesus, the light of the world, dispels the darkness in our lives, offering us hope and a new perspective.

**PRAYER:** Thank you for sending your Son, Jesus, to be the light of the world. We are grateful for the hope, clarity, and new perspective His light brings into our lives. As we navigate the complexities of this world, we pray for the grace to trust in His guidance and to find comfort in His presence. Amen.

Tuesday, February 27

**SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 5:1-2 (NRSVUE)**

**Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.**

As a child in the 40's (1940's) I fell in love with a song in Christian Ed. that basically said, "I want to follow Jesus". At 4-5 yrs. old I didn't quite know what that meant but ... Also in that song was a line that went "In him there is no darkness at all" but by the age of 12 I had experienced the deaths of all my grandparents, a still born sibling and some aunts and uncles. I, in all my wisdom at the time did/could not understand how the two were equal parts of follow.

So, setting out on a 25+ year "Sabbatical", I began exploring following a number of "worldly" alternatives, many not so God like. I openly mocked and attacked any and everyone who talked about being followers of God/Jesus. There were too many books and theologies and crazy's all with varied theories of how to follow Him.

After my mother's death and the loss of our stillborn child, in grief, I was allowed a "rebirth" in Christ. I started to read The Bible and found with my wife's help all that I needed to do to follow was ... "Love my neighbor as myself" and "Do unto others as I wanted done unto me". In the words of my favorite character in Bull Durham "It's in the Book you can look it up". For the last 45+ years I have attempted to be a beloved child of God, in thought, word and deed. For what is left of this 80+ life I hope that I can do more and more to help others to see His Love and understand or feel the springtime in the rain fragrance of following Him. Sacrifice is not death it is surrender to God for others. "I wish to continue to follow Jesus". Please consider, joining me.

**PRAYER:** Lord in your love let these ramblings of my mind fall on those searching to follow you. I ask this in the name of your Son my/our Lord, Savior and Brother, Jesus Christ, Amen.

Wednesday, February 28

**SCRIPTURE: Luke 9: 10-11 (NRSVUE)**

On their return the apostles told Jesus all they had done. Then, taking them along, he slipped quietly into a city called Bethsaida. When the crowd found out about it, they followed him, and he welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God and healed those who needed to be cured.

We've all seen dump trucks on the road, with a sign in back that says "Construction Vehicle - Do Not Follow." Good advice, especially in bad weather! We don't want to end up accidentally in a construction zone. Following such a vehicle can lead to danger.

In today's reading, the disciples had just returned from the mission that Jesus had sent them on, to preach and heal in different towns. Here, they have returned, and Jesus listened to their stories, and eventually went quietly into Bethsaida with them. He didn't have a sign on his back, but the people heard where he was, and they followed Him—with no risk! He warmly welcomed them. He did for the crowd what the disciples had just done during their mission—he preached about God, and healed people. In a few more verses in Luke 9, he'll also feed 5,000 of them, with bread and fishes, one of the best remembered stories of Jesus's miracles.

What a difference in signs! One that says "Don't Follow," and another one that says "Follow Me"—the latter being one that invites people to benefit greatly if they do. The crowd of people in Bethsaida heard the sign and saw what happens when people follow Jesus's lead. They had paid attention to what was happening in the area when this man and his disciples came to preach and heal.

We, too, benefit from following Jesus, when we come to church and hear the Word preached—and we can also be signs to others, by the way we live our lives, about what happens when we choose to follow Jesus.

**PRAYER:** I want to walk as a child of the light. I want to follow Jesus. God set the stars to give light to the world. The star of my life is Jesus. In Him there is no darkness at all. The night and the day are both alike. The Lamb is the light of the city of God. Shine in my heart Lord Jesus. (LBW 815) Amen.

Thursday, February 29

**SCRIPTURE:** Colossians 2:6-7 (NRSVUE)

**As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.**

Well, I thought I would take a year off from writing a Lenten Devotional, but when I saw the theme was one of my most meaningful Bible verses, I could not say no. When I first saw this verse it was part of a display on the bulletin board in the educational building of a church. When I paused to read it I got chills. Wow I thought, that's it- this Micah guy really summed it all up in one short verse. What more do we mortals have to do to follow in his footsteps. Nothing but to do what Micah wrote. He really kissed it! (Keep it simple stupid) I love those Readers Digest verses.

As Christians we know what our Lord has done and taught and all we need to do to be good, strong followers. It cannot be simpler than what Micah stated. No big explanation needed- Do Justice, Love Kindness, Walk Humbly. Follow His path and these words and your heart light will shine for you and those you touch. It can be an inner glow or an outward one, but rest assured, it will show that you picked the best person to follow.

**PRAYER:** Well Lord, it looks like Neil Diamond summed this verse up fairly well too. "Put on your heart light, let it shine wherever you go." As we reflect on Micah's powerful, simple verse, we pray that remembering those words will continue to remind us how simple it can be to be to be one of your followers. What a way to have a blessed life. Thankfulness abounds! Amen.



Friday, March 1

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

Not with our ancestors did the Lord make this covenant but with us, who are all of us here alive today.

It is said that the Lord has no grandchildren.

That statement has power and direction.

The power is in knowing that we are each children of God. We are not a generation or more removed from him but of his issue. As children of God, we owe him our love and devotion, service and worship. God made a covenant with Abraham that was fulfilled by the risen Christ. Because we are children of God, we all share in the promises of the risen Christ. The promise of salvation is not an inheritance. We must each reach out to the Lord ourselves and accept the death and resurrection of Christ as our own promise fulfilled.

The direction is knowing how to follow in His ways. We were given tools and teachers as a roadmap and guides to strengthen our faith and lead us away from the fears of this world. The Bible should always be the first source of knowledge to understand how to follow in his ways. The teachings of Christ found there give us a clear path to follow every day. Next, there are the lives of the saints who traveled here before us beginning with Martin Luther who led us towards the understanding that we are saved by our faith alone. There are also pastors and lay teachers to instill in us the commandments to love God above all else and to love our neighbors as ourselves.

The Lord requires us to be his followers and through study and prayer each of us can accomplish this task.

**PRAYER:** Heavenly Father please help us to stay on the path of salvation you have laid out before us. We thank you for everyone who showed us your ways and ask for your forgiveness when we fail and your love in returning us to your flock. Amen.

Saturday, March 2

**SCRIPTURE: 1 John 2:5-6 (NRSVUE)**

**But whoever obeys his word, truly in this person the love of God has reached perfection. By this we know that we are in him 6 whoever says, I abide in him, ought to walk in the same way as he walked.**

Reading passages and verses, asking the question what it means to follow in His ways. The more I read the more questions there were. Spending days looking for the answer.

It occurred to me it was a simple answer. Christ was more like a servant, so what does he ask of me. So many passages of Christ' life on this earth, as he healed the sick his followers grew. They believed him. And they grew in faith, or did they follow him not knowing he was leading them to a life as a Christian. To be more like him, to be more Christian, to set aside our worldly needs and be like Christ and follow him is a huge undertaking.

So, do we put our needs aside and follow Christ and do what he asks? Christ asks us to be servants and go out and be like him. Maybe not healing like him, but to spread the word, feed the hungry, help the needy. A small gesture, a helping hand realizing those who need him maybe be afraid to ask. The Lord says," ask and you shall receive." Do we ask for things of the world or do we ask him to show us the way?

**PRAYER:** We pray today, give us the strength to walk as you did, giving of ourselves to your glory. Let us spend this time reflecting on what you ask us to do not only during this Lenten time but through the entire year. Amen.

# To love MERCY



March 3-9

Monday, March 4

**SCRIPTURE: Matthew 9:12-13 (NRSVUE)**

**But when he heard this, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous but sinners."**

Jesus did not come to call the righteous, but to give his everlasting mercy to those of us with sin in our hearts. I am a sinner. We all fall short of God's expectations. We were all born with sin. Everyday we try our best yet, we are human, and we are all sinners. Does God really expect us to be perfect? I believe we are to make every effort to emulate Jesus, to walk in his footsteps, to be "Christlike". What exactly is "Mercy"? The word, at its core, means "price paid". God's mercy is freedom. He is merciful regardless of our motives. The price of our disobedience (sin) has been paid through God's grace. Where does mercy begin with each of us? It begins inside, in your heart of hearts; at the very core of your being. I have come to realize you cannot be merciful if you carry anger, resentment or unrest in your heart.

I recently had a personal experience that made me see I was filled with exactly those feelings. My eldest son agreed to help me with a small project at my home. Weeks had passed, and he didn't contact me as he said he would. I waited a few more days yet, heard nothing, not a word; I quickly became indignant. I was angry with him, yet I said nothing to him. I just "assumed" he should have remembered. As I prepared to write this devotional, I realized I was the one that needed to be merciful! My anger was unjustified; my thought process skewed. Once I understood my feelings, my attitude changed. I knew I had to be the one to reach out. Yet God, in all his love, had mercy on me, and had my son call me the very day I was planning to reach out to him.

Is there someone in your life that deserves your mercy? Examine your heart, be honest with yourself and you will be given the gift of freedom.

**PRAYER:** All merciful and loving God, open my heart that I may acknowledge any feelings of unrest, anger or resentment. Replace those feelings with your everlasting compassion and mercy. To the glory of your name. Amen.

Tuesday, March 5

**SCRIPTURE: James 2:13 (NRSVUE)**

**For judgement will be without mercy to anyone who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgement.**

This chapter in James deals with how to obey God's laws. He advises us not to judge by appearances, and to love your neighbor as you love yourself. He exhorts us to obey all of the law. The consequence of not obeying is judgement. Mercy is often tied into judgement. An offender may "throw themselves on the mercy of the court", asking the judge or jury to soften or eliminate the punishment that they are slated to receive. It implies acknowledgement of their wrongdoing but asks for leniency.

It is easy to be judgmental. It is not often easy to show mercy. We want to see people get their "just desserts". In showing mercy we are obeying the charge to love our neighbors as ourselves, showing mercy as we would like it to be shown to us. James is saying that if we do not show mercy to others we will not be shown mercy ourselves. Showing mercy is part of what we are charged to do as followers of Jesus. This doesn't mean we allow terrible crimes to go unpunished. It does mean that we should be willing to temper our judgement of others with understanding and love for our neighbor.

We are charged to subdue our thirst for revenge and follow the example of Christ. Since we all sin and fail to follow God's commandments, we should not rush to the judgement of our neighbors, but be merciful instead. True Judgement is in God's hands and he is merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

**PRAYER:** Lord Jesus I thank you for all the mercy and grace you have shown me, help me to curb my judgmental tendencies and be merciful to others. Amen.

Wednesday, March 6

**SCRIPTURE:**        **Matthew 23:23 (NRSVUE)**

**"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint, dill, and cumin and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. It is these you ought to have practiced without neglecting the others."**

My first car was a beauty! I had a great job and could afford a nice car. I was very proud of it and every day I would polish all the chrome on it until it sparkled. My brother, Bob, had an old car. It didn't sparkle, not like mine. I often teased him about it. Especially when he would be under the hood doing whatever mechanics do. "You should get rid of that old junker", and "you should get a better job so you can afford a real car". Even our friends noticed the sparkle in mine and the dismal shape of his. They would often complement me in front of Bob and insult him in front of me. Well, after about three years I started having trouble with the car. It still sparkled but it also sputtered and stalled. The mechanic told me it had no oil and I would need a new engine. I said "no one ever told me to check the oil". Bob's old beater, still looks worn and tired but it runs great because he pays attention to what is really important. He isn't trying to impress anyone, he is happy with what he has and just lets the insults go. He deserved better from me.

That is what Jesus is saying here. Mercy is far more important than showing off with tithes of spices (which weren't required). People in old worn out clothes are far more important than the Pharisee's robes. It's the heart, the engine, that matters. You can have nice clothes but take care of the heart first.

*Moral of the story, Be Like Bob!*

**PRAYER:**    Lord Jesus, thank you for this lesson, that is sometimes hard to hear. Keep me from bragging about how great I am. Only you know what is under my hood and what I have neglected. Help me to see the need of my neighbor and have mercy.    Amen.

Thursday, March 7

**SCRIPTURE: 1 Chronicles 21:11 (NRSVUE)**

**So Gad came to David and said to him,  
"Thus says the Lord: Take your choice:**

David is one of my favorite people in the bible. He did amazing things for God and against him. He was perfectly broken like I am. Possibly you may think you are too. David has ordered a census of the kingdom he rules to ascertain the strength of his army. In 21:1 it states Satan incited David to do this. So did Satan force David to take this action? Like Satan always does, he plays to the flaws already inside of us. Sin is in our DNA, if you truly believe you have descended from the garden of Eden. Adam and Eve are in your family tree. I know full well my flaws that I try and conceal from the world. Satan plays to them daily for me. Why would God be mad at David for this? The first Census was ordered by God in Numbers 1:2. Did God order this in Chronicles, No. Satan enticed David but how? Like all of us when we are the in low of the lows and feel like a reed supporting 10 elephants from the ground. We all say "Lord come to me now and help me. I cannot do this without you." I have uttered these words more than we both will ever know. Then fast forward, we get past the hardship. Possibly our life has blossomed. Maybe we're at a corporate BBQ and start bragging to look good to some fellow staff or competitors. Do we tell them I'm nothing without the Lord's help or do we thump our chest, then say I did this?

Satan has played to David's ego, as a reformed narcissist this is very real to me. David wants the census for his pride to feel good about what he has done. Because of this he was given three options of punishment for him and his people. I'm so glad I did not have to make that choice. Why don't I get what I deserve and be given terrible choices that my actions warrant? Because God's mercy made the changes in me, I could not make; His mercy through my Lord and Savior Jesus. Jesus is mercy.

**PRAYER:** Dear Jesus, I'm a sinner and have sinned against you. Please come into my heart and fill me with your mercies. Encourage me to share these mercies with all as you have shared them with me. Amen.

**WHAT DOES THE LORD REQUIRE OF YOU?**

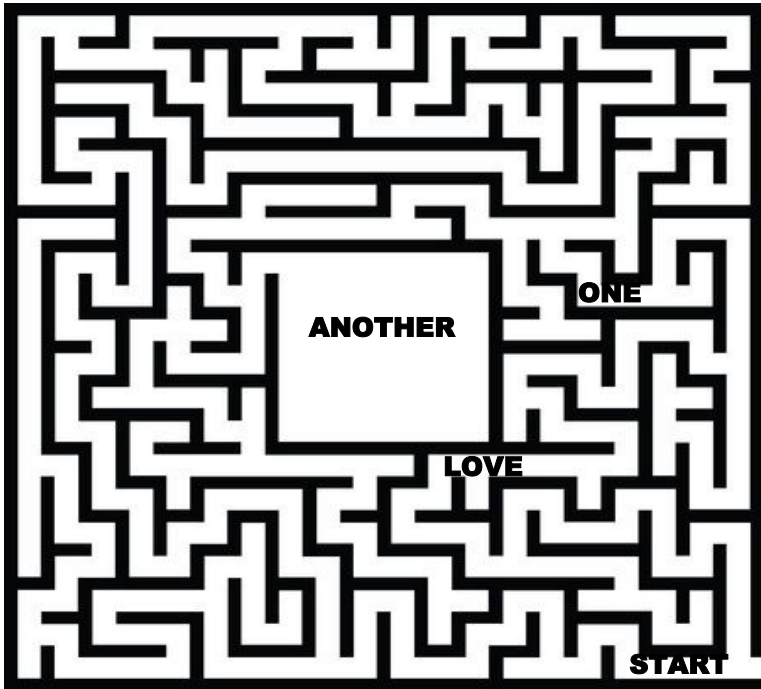
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BEHAVIORS	HUMBLY	LOVE
DISCIPLES	JESUS	MICAH
FEAR	JUSTLY	REQUIRE
FOLLOW	KINDNESS	SERVE
FOOTSTEPS	LORD	WALK



## **LOVE ONE ANOTHER WORD MAZE**

**Find your way from the start  
of the maze and connect the  
words in the correct order  
from the answer phrase.**



Let us make a \_\_\_\_\_ effort to \_\_\_\_\_  
more \_\_\_\_\_ not just during  
\_\_\_\_\_, but all \_\_\_\_\_ long.

Friday, March 8

**SCRIPTURE: Jude 1:21 (NRSVUE)**

**keep yourselves in the love of God; look forward to the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to[a] eternal life.**

My Dad looked out of the open office window every morning before I could make his coffee. I never thought of it until I began my spiritual journey that I realized it must have been his time to spend with God before he started his day. He was an independent contractor and an avid sport enthusiast. He did not attend Church regularly except Good Friday and Easter Sunday however, supported Mom in our Christian development. As an adult I learned that he provided free labor to religious organizations, guaranteed loans for students seeking higher education in addition to many other kindnesses. It reminded me of "Praying in secret."

Due to the premature death of my grandfather, Dad didn't complete high school, he became an apprentice to help support the family. I wanted to ask him, why did he extend concern for others when his dreams were unfulfilled, he wanted to represent the country in cycling at the Olympics. Instead he became involved in the Athletic Association and, supported athletes financially and emotionally to pursue their ambitions. He was team manager for several Olympics. In the end God wins.

2Timothy 4 6-8 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the Faith

**PRAYER:** Father, as I journey through this Lenten season, remind me of Your journey to the Cross. Let me recognize those in need and show kindness in thought, word and deed. In Jesus Name. Amen.

Saturday, March 9

**SCRIPTURE:** Psalm 119:132 (NRSVUE)

**Turn to me and have mercy on me, as you always do to those who love your name**

Mercy: Compassion or forgiveness shown toward someone whom it is within ones power to punish or harm. For those who love mercy means they choose not to be offended and compassionately sees a hurting heart behind hurtful words.

Hurtful words can end many a good relationships. If we just could take a step back and try to understand " love Mercy" maybe we could show compassion rather than return our own hurtful words. My husband will tell me I am mean to him but I am just reacting to what was said to me. You get what you give I usually reply. This is my area of our relationship I need to work on .Stop reacting and try to understand why he is having hurtful words to me ,or just express my self better rather than lashing back at him .I know this but I do have trouble with the not reacting part.

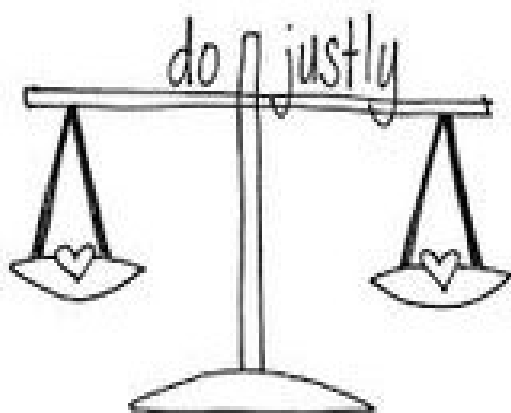
We seem to hurt the ones we love the most and God is at the top of this list. If I could stick with "What would Jesus do" before reacting to life's challenges I would be on the right track. My sister pointed out I am a hot head and until she told me that I had no idea but I think she is right. It is my passion for right and wrong that leads to the "hot head" description .

Compassion is easier than Forgiveness, God is requiring both from us. So get to work.

**PRAYER:** Heavenly Father:

Thank you for your Mercy on me. I am trying to follow in your ways. Open my heart to have mercy on those in my life that I need to forgive. Amen.

# To act JUSTLY



March 10-16

Monday, March 11

**SCRIPTURE:** Psalm 106:3 (NRSVUE)

**Happy are those who observe justice, who do righteousness at all times.**

As we walk in our life's journey...we may feel we've lost our way. The passage speaks of the people of Israel, who forgot about their blessings and good deeds from God.

Fast forward to our everyday lives now. In these chaotic times, we are constantly thrown in the crossroads of good and evil, justice and righteousness. Perhaps humans have always lived at these crossroads over every century since the dawn of time. We will most certainly find these forks in the road of life in the future. How can we course correct?

The Psalm loosely reminds me of one of the Boy Scout mottos: "Do a Good Turn Daily." Though it does not speak of justice, it provides a centered compass of what is right. This simple declaration is based on our spiritual compass, the need for those to lend a hand to our community. The more we provide for others, we will find it will come naturally to us in time, with no hesitation.

Let us reflect in our daily lives. Do we "do a good turn daily?" Could you just imagine how amazing our world could be? How can this Psalm be reflected in our personal journey and in our congregation? The simplest action we can do to change the world is to act with love and kindness. Simply put, do a good turn daily. We are not perfect, we need to look to Jesus to do a good turn daily.

**PRAYER:** Dear God, help us to find the wisdom we seek through you. May we find the answers in our daily lives through you. May we act justly in doing what is right in our homes, communities and the world. Help us to do a good turn daily, Lord. May we keep you in the center of our moral compass as we live in the crossroads of daily life. Amen.

Tuesday, March 12

**SCRIPTURE: Zechariah 7:9 (NRSVUE)**

**"Thus says the Lord of hosts: Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another;**

God expects us to act justly, to show mercy and kindness and render true judgments. That sounds like the right way to behave and react, but what does that mean? The word justly means to do what is morally right or fair.

Kindness is an easy concept to understand. It is not hard to do when others speak nice words to us, act with thoughtfulness, and actions are driven by love. Showing mercy toward others means forgiving their actions and withholding punishment and not retaliating. This can be very difficult to do, especially when someone has hurt us or someone else deeply either emotionally or physically. A reaction of retaliation and hurting someone as they have done to us or our loved ones or even a stranger seems like the fair way, the right way, but it is completely opposite of how God wants us to act.

Rendering judgement is God's job, His decision, not ours. We are never to judge our fellow human beings and decide what they deserve or don't deserve. This is when following God's words and being like Jesus is so important and we need to listen to what the Bible teaches us about acting justly.

Forgiveness is a very powerful emotion and gesture. It takes a great deal of faith, and strength to let go of hurt or loss we have encountered by another person, whether they were a stranger or loved one, but is the reaction God wants us to have. Whether we receive an apology or not, deciding to let go of resentment, anger and feeling that person needs to be punished are feelings and emotions God wants us to not carry with us. He wants us to forgive, to let go, to break free of the cruelty, judgement, and punishment we may feel toward others. This will free us of those burdens and negativity and be able to do what is morally right and acting justly as God teaches us to be.

**PRAYER:** Almighty Father, I ask for the strength to forgive those who wrong me and remind me that retaliation is not the kind way to act. Please help me to always think and act justly as you teach us to be. Amen.

Wednesday, March 13

**SCRIPTURE:** Ecclesiastes 3:17 (NRSVUE)

**I said to myself, "God will judge the righteous and the wicked, for he has appointed a time for every matter and for every work."**

My faith and belief in God enable me to accept that my God is a just God in all he does. His judgement is perfect, and he judges each of us appropriately, whether we are righteous or wicked. Everything in our lives occurs at His appointed time. We may not always understand it in the moment, but hopefully, in time we will understand his judgement and timing, even if we don't understand or agree with the outcomes. It makes me think of a line in a song that has helped me understand it is all in His time and His judgement ... "Sometimes I thank God for unanswered prayers."

God is always with us; His judgement is right even if we don't always get the response we hoped for ... remember and have faith in His justice. Time and patience can help us to act more justly toward others. It can also help grow our faith and acceptance of your plan for our lives.

**PRAYER:** Lord, help us remember it is not our place to judge the righteous or wicked ... it is yours. Your timing is perfection. All things in our lives happen as you planned them. Give us the strength to find the patience to accept your timing. Amen.

Thursday, March 14

**SCRIPTURE:** Proverbs 29:7 (NRSVUE)

**The righteous know the rights of the poor; the wicked have no such understanding.**

As someone who works with refugees, I hear stories of suffering just about everyday. Most, if not all, of our clients live below the poverty level and struggle to feed their families — they fit the part of “the poor” by all means. Furthermore, asylum seekers are not legally eligible to work, thus keeping an entire population of people living in squalor. The majority of refugees have no “US tie,” or someone they can turn to for help in the United States, and consequently rely heavily on Social Security Benefits like food stamps, Medicaid, and federal supplemental income programs.

A lot of people have an instinctual, knee-jerk reaction to these terms; freeloaders, illegal aliens, lazy, good-for-nothing immigrants, etc. Who are they to come into our country and use tax payer money for themselves when they aren't even citizens?

While this sentiment can be understandable after years of seeing a sizable portion of your paycheck deducted for Social Security, we have to remind ourselves of God's intentions, reflected in this verse: “the rights of the poor,” of which “the wicked have no such understanding.” So often we let ourselves be blinded by money — overvalued in our commercialized American society — and our greediness prevents us from recognizing the plight of the poor. Our fixation on the cost of government subsidies inhibits our ability to see the worth of these programs. We are so busy counting all the dollars “lost,” we forget to see the ways our money helps people with nowhere else to turn.

While we may not be able to understand the lives of the poor and downtrodden, we should be grateful for this privilege.

**PRAYER:** Lord, in moments of frustration please help us recognize our own greed. Remind us of your teachings, and encourage us to give selflessly to those who need help the most. Please give us the wisdom to recognize that while we may never understand the experiences of those we help, that is the result of our blessings in this life, and we must be grateful for all we have. Amen.



Friday, March 15

**SCRIPTURE:** Proverbs 21:3 (NRSVUE)

**"To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice."**

During Lent people have given something up for lent. They have sacrificed something such as not eating candy, bread, dessert, ice cream, not drinking pop or beer, or not watching TV. In the above Bible verse God wants us to do righteousness and justice not to sacrifice something. Simply put God wants us to take something up not give up something during Lent.

What will you be doing this Lent? Will you be saving money to buy food for a food pantry or an animal shelter? Will you be helping an older person by visiting with them or taking them shopping? Will you volunteer in a soup kitchen or make a dessert for a neighbor? Will you be making phone calls to keep in touch with family and friends? How about reading a book in the Bible you always wanted to read? The list is endless to do righteousness and justice for God.

**PRAYER:** Lord direct and guide me to what you want me to take up this Lent and continue it through the year.  
**AMEN.**

Saturday, March 16

**SCRIPTURE:** Proverbs 21:15 (NRSVUE)

**When justice is done, it is a joy to the righteous but dismay to evildoers.**

When I was asked to do this I thought it would be easy. Then when I sat down I had to do some serious soul searching only to realize that during some of the lowest times of my life I didn't walk justly. I didn't humble myself nor honorably acted the way God commanded me to. I was a deceitful- despicable person.

I knew the lord. I knew his commandments. I was a "me" person. Then something happened that changed my life. When in June of 1983 I was home, my grandmother gave me a great aunts Bible that passed away shortly before. I was living in Brooklyn, N.Y at the time. On the train coming home I turned to a favorite passage Philippians 1:21. To live is Christ and to die is gain. When I got home I had brought the Bible with me to my bowling league and showed it to an elderly gentleman that worked there He said one thing to me "adultery Is not only between an man and wife but between man and God" Then the lightbulb went on. We must honor Gods will and not our own. Since that day the end of June I have tried to live "justly".

**PRAYER:** Dear Lord keep us in pure of heart and mind that we may honor your ways and do your will. We may humbly obey. Amen.

# Walk HUMBLY with your God



March 17-23

Monday, March 18

**SCRIPTURE:**        **Ephesians 2:9 (NRSVUE)**

**not the result of works, so that no one may boast.**

The most desirable path I can find is to love God humbly. There is a journey, or path, that we all walk. The path to our own grace with God. I strive to walk this path making a conscious effort to remain humble. There is a line that forms between sharing your charitable experiences and becoming a braggart. It is easy to get caught up in boasting about our good deeds, and that isn't what we are tasked to do.

Therefore, I try to live modestly while not overstating my importance. It is not about me. It is not about my personal deeds. It is about the grace of God found while walking an unassuming attitude about my achievements. For none of those achievements have value without God first. None of my experiences have merit without putting God first. I must recognize that priority can be found in humbly seeking God's grace in my deeds and achievements.

I have a history of lower self-esteem. This has been a gift of sorts and has given me the natural ability to be humble. The scripture isn't about having pride in our accomplishments. Rather, the grace of God is found in being humble as we follow the path of God. It's ultimately not about me, it's about God.

**PRAYER:**        Heavenly Father, who knows all things, from whom all good things come: I ask you to forgive me when I am not as humble as I should be. I walk along this path you have shown me, in search of Your grace. I strive for finding your grace in all that I say and do without being boastful and remaining humble.        Amen.

Tuesday, March 19

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

**Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.**

Self-reliance, stubbornness and bad habits of a lifetime are just some of the things that stand in the way of "leaning not on your own understanding". Many of us are taught from an early age to be self-reliant, to "stand on our own two feet". All kinds of self-help experts offer advice on self-reliance. Unfortunately the flaw in self-reliance is its crumbling foundation.

The first word of this verse, TRUST, can be a real stumbling block for us. We are taught to trust nobody, which leads us back to self-reliance. Stubbornness and pride keep us in a vicious cycle. Learning to trust can be a humbling experience because we may have to admit that we were wrong. How many times have we insisted on doing things our way and found ourselves in a tangle we can't easily escape? How many times have we stressed about the future and arrived there only to find that He is already there and He has everything under control?

"Leaning not on our own understanding" means humbling ourselves to set aside those things that we hold onto so tightly, always wanting to be right. Setting aside those things clears the way for a better way, His way. In contemplating Jesus' incomprehensible act of laying down His life for us, we realize that there is much that we may never really understand with our human capabilities. Giving up our way and choosing to lean on Him can be the biggest relief we will ever know.

**PRAYER:** Jesus, You have taught us the meaning of true humility by Your actions when You walked upon this earth. Help me to humble myself, knowing that I can trust in You and that You will show me the way. Amen.

Wednesday, March 20

**SCRIPTURE:**      **Luke 14:11 (NRSVUE)**

**For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.**

To be humble is to have or show a modest or low estimate of one's own importance. To be humble is the opposite of being prideful or arrogant. It is the ability to see your own flaws and struggles and to own them - not as weakness, rather as a badge of honor. No human being is perfect, but for some reason there is a belief out there that making a mistake or failing in some way means you are not worthy - or that you are dumb. This is a huge misconception that needs to be challenged. To make a mistake is human, to own that mistake and to be able to grow from it, that takes character and humility. This passage in the bible exemplifies that. Luke is saying that if you are boastful or prideful - greatness will always be just out of reach. It may seem counterintuitive, however, to fail and to fall and struggle, that is how you grow and reach the difficult goals in your life. That is how you grow in your faith and grace.

**PRAYER:**      Lord; help me to admit my struggles and shortcomings - guide me as I work to become the most humble of servants, not only in my relationship with you, but in my dealings with all beings. I understand that humility is needed as I strive to become the best version of myself. Thank you lord, for your guidance and understanding. In your name, I pray.    Amen.

Thursday, March 21

**SCRIPTURE:** L1Peter 5:6 (NRSVUE)

**"Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time"**

I knew a pastor who was a good preacher. Very dynamic. Spellbinding sometimes in the way he told stories. His baritone voice even had teenage girls sitting up to listen! There was only one problem. He knew it too! He knew he was good and it went to his head. He not only preached about God, but he acted as if he was God himself!! That's not what Peter had in mind in this 5th chapter of the book that bears his name. Pastor Peter was encouraging his flock to take care of each other with a willing and loving heart - not like a boss who lords it over those he/she thinks are lesser, you know, not as blessed and gifted as he is. Knock off the arrogance, Peter asks, and humble yourselves "under the mighty hand of God." In other words, Peter tells them, you're just a servant - hopefully a willing and grateful one- who is called to witness to God's grace and mercy by living your life as Jesus lived his - humbly, lovingly and graciously serving others.

In our self conceit, that's not always easy. Getting a big head is a common affliction. But who of us dares to measure himself next to Jesus? Humility is a wonderful, if not always appreciated gift. With it we can walk with our God and be the servant he has called us to be.

**PRAYER:** Mighty God, take away my self-importance and inspire me to serve you humbly. Amen.

Friday, March 22

**SCRIPTURE:** James 4:6 (NRSVUE)

**But God gives all the more grace; therefore it says, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."**

I have been blessed throughout my life to have known many wonderful, Spirit filled humble saints. Women in my family and in our congregation who went their lives setting beautiful examples of lives filled in service to God, never looking to draw attention to themselves. One in particular lived her life in quiet, loving, humble obedience. She served her Lord through her gifts of time, talents, and treasures. She served her church as an organist, choir director, and teacher, assisting with running VBS as well as teaching Sunday School. She shared her cooking talents through dinners, and baked goods for church functions, and shared her skills as a seamstress as needed whether it was crafting a cover for the church organ, or helping with items to be sent to the mission field. She supported her church financially, as well as assisting missionary operations overseas, and in the states. At home she was often seen at her piano playing hymns, in silent prayer, or reading her devotional or Bible.

Many people did not know of her many achievements in life, because she did not look to be noticed for what she did. In fact she was dumbfounded when she was given the Philip Melancthon Award (an award given through Lutheran Charities). She felt others should have been recognized instead of her. She was content to serve as she was called, and offer whatever she felt she was asked to do.

She taught me to listen to what I felt I was being called to do, to try to do it without drawing attention to myself, and to give God freely whatever was asked of me. I have a long way to go, but her example holds forth to what is meant to walk humbly with my God.

**PRAYER:** Heavenly Father, Thank you for the many saints in my life who have set forth shining examples of what it is to walk humbly in your sight; always seeking to do your will and give glory to you. Help me to strive to follow their example, to seek you and follow in your ways; to be an example to others of your love without drawing attention to myself. Amen.



Saturday, March 23

**SCRIPTURE:**        **Matthew 11:29 (NRSVUE)**

**Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest in your souls.**

The theme for this Lenten devotional is "What does the Lord require of you?" and the weekly theme for this week is walk humbly with your god. So as we read Matthew 11:29 Jesus is reminding us that he is willing and ready to teach and lead us down the path of being gentle and humble in heart. And interestingly by doing so we will find rest in our souls.

This reminds me of the saying: "It is impossible to help someone else without helping yourself." In many ways this is the most helpful and beautiful part of what Jesus is sharing with us. Usually when we are asked to do something it requires some of our time and some amount of effort to fulfill the request. So imagine what the world could be like if more people were to accept Jesus' invitation to learn from him and follow in his footsteps. Everyday we hear stories of war in the Ukraine and Gaza, political unrest all over the world, poverty, poor health and endless suffering.

So my fellow Christians and friends perhaps it is time that we seriously consider accepting Jesus' invitation to take his yoke upon us and learn from him and walk humbly with our God. By doing so, we can help make the world a more loving place and find rest in our souls.

**PRAYER:**        Dear Lord: We thank you for teaching and leading us to be gentle and humble in heart and to walk humbly with God. With your love and support we can help make this world a more loving and caring place one day at a time.

In your name we pray.        Amen.

# LOVE God



March 24-30

Monday, March 25

**SCRIPTURE: 1 John 3:18 (NRSVUE)**

**Little children, let us not love in word or speech, but in deed or truth**

While words can be encouraging, God also calls us to be active in ministering to others. Jesus was not just preaching the good news. He was also demonstrating compassion by his deeds. No, we cannot do miracles like the ones we read about in the bible, but sometimes help given sure feels like a miracle when you need it most.

Cousin Irma was born with Williams Syndrome (WS), a rare genetic developmental disorder. However, one of the most amazing characteristics common to WS that Irma was blessed with, was a friendly and caring nature.

Knowing that Irma was declining, I wanted to celebrate her by hosting a 70th birthday party. I shared with my friend that it was getting hard to manage her in my home, and I was not sure how I could give Irma this party. Beth gave me the great idea to have the gala in our accessible church hall. And even helped out in the kitchen so I was able to enjoy what would be her last birthday. What a wonderful gift!!

Years ago, help also arrived from church friends who did not just empathize with me as I struggled to be there for my ailing Mom. Instead they also cared for our little girls so I had the ability to be there for Mom.

It is that action of love that Jesus showed in his ministry. Sometimes for us it is as simple as opening a door for someone. However, sometimes we are called to "get in the trenches". This may involve unpleasant, tiring or stressful tasks. And truth be told, sometimes we really don't want to do them. But as Christians we are called to walk the talk of showing God's kindness.

**PRAYER:** Dear God, guide us to be vessels of love by following your directive to be helpers. Open our hearts to see other's needs and to take actions that will make their life better. Amen.

Tuesday, March 26

**SCRIPTURE: 1 John 4:19 (NRSVUE)**

**We love because He first loved us.**

The Bible instructs us that the first two commandments are the most important: love God with all of your heart, and love your neighbor as yourself. They also are often the most difficult, especially loving our neighbor as ourselves. We are told to be Christlike and when I picture Jesus, I see Him talking and ministering to everyone, regardless of their lifestyle or backgrounds.

A young man once told me that as a teen he was very depressed and troubled, feeling alone and worthless. He told me that if someone passing him by on the street or in the store had just made eye contact with him and/or smiled or said "hello," he would have felt acknowledged and his spirits would have been lifted, at least momentarily. This man's comments made me realize that sometimes what we think are the simplest actions, are often the most meaningful. We don't realize what effect we may have on people.

I think of people whom I have crossed paths with, who demonstrated God's love: A colleague helping me across an icy street; neighbors in my apartment building bringing my packages up to my apartment because they know I have difficulty doing the stairs; my sister calling me one day before Christmas and saying she would put up my tree for me; a stranger I passed smiling at me and wishing me a good day.

These are just a few ways to show love to people and to bring us closer to God.

**PRAYER:** Dear Heavenly Father, please make me mindful of others each day and help me to show people that they are important to You. Amen.

Wednesday, March 27

**SCRIPTURE: Mark 12:30 (NRSVUE)**

**You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.**

The Bible tells us that God loves us. That's a beautiful thought...the Creator of the universe loves us: you, me and everyone. Even when we were straying away, or prioritizing things in the wrong order, or feeling too busy to pay attention to God, or a multitude of other excuses that we could use....God was still loving us. And He will continue to love us forever.

How do we repay that kind of love? What do we do about being loved that way? The easiest and really the only answer is to simply love Him back. We start to realize how many ways God has shown His love to us. You know the old saying that hindsight is 20/20. Looking back on your life, think of all the blessings you've had. From your youngest dreams, to your adult life accomplishments, to older age life celebrations, and everything else in between, you will see that God was there with you loving you through each one of them. And what about the greatest gift of all, God sending His only Son from glory to die in our place to atone for our sins, and then to rise from the dead...assuring our safe eternity. That is the most amazing love there could ever be!

God commands us to love Him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. But when we think about Him...His undying love, His ultimate sacrifice, His constant care, His amazing blessings....we realize that He is very easy to love. He accepts us for who we are and loves us through everything. What a gift it is for us to be able to sincerely love Him back!

**PRAYER:** Dear Lord God, thank you for the amazing and awesome gift of your Love. I thank you for loving me and blessing me throughout my entire life. And I thank you for the privilege of knowing You and being able to love You. Please accept my love as the best gift I can give back to you. In Jesus' blessed name I pray. Amen.

Thursday, March 28

**SCRIPTURE: Psalm 42:1 (NRSVUE)**

**As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God.**

Most people have a special friend that they love to spend time with. They look forward to time together. The newly married couple are always seeking to be together. While one is at work, they are thinking constantly about each other and cannot be separated, unless it is absolutely necessary. This can also be seen in the business world. There are certain business men or women that people would love to spend some time with. They want to learn from that person and gain their knowledge or experience. The writer of this psalm talks about a panting desire to be with God. He is thirsting as a deer thirsts for water to spend time with God. He wants to be in God's presence. While spending time with people can be good, there is one who is better to spend time with. People can provide some temporary help or comfort, but God can provide for eternal help and comfort.

In church there are many people who believe in God, but He is not the center of their lives. He is not what they seek and want the most in their lives. They are busy with other things in their lives. The picture of a deer panting for water is one of who is desperate for water. It is one of life and death. Without water, one will die, it is needed. The same is with God. God should be the most important person in one's life. So much so that without God, one would feel as if he would die. There may be many things in your life that you would like to have. Some of which you may think you need to have. However, the most important thing to have is God in the center of your life. Spending time with God should be your greatest concern in your life. Stopping the rest of life to be with God should be a common scene in your life. Without God, you will make poor choices, you will be weak, and you will lose the battles in this life. With God you will have joy, peace, strength and comfort for everything. What are you desperate for today?

**PRAYER:** I pray today that you will know God personally; that you will desire to spend time with God; that you will know God's presence in your life daily; and that God will be the center of your life. Amen.

Good Friday, March 29

**SCRIPTURE: John 15:12 (NRSVUE)**

**This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.**

When I read the word commandment, I thought of the Ten Commandments that God gave Moses for the people to follow. The first four commandments are your relationship with God and the other six are your relationship with others. Jesus' relationship with us is a powerful one. He loves us no matter what we do or say. Jesus wants us to live our lives as He did. Because of His love for us, He died on the cross to save our sins. That is true love.

Jesus' commandment that you love one another as He has loved you can be challenging in today's world. There are so many things happening such as bullying and not being diverse that will prevent a person from loving the one who has done bad. We need to take a step back and think about this commandment. Jesus wants us to offer affection and gentle kindness to everyone. Even those that have done wrong. Maybe if we do, these people can see what being kind and affectionate is like and do the same.

Just imagine what it was like as Jesus was going to be crucified. People called him names, spit on him and made fun of him. He still was gentle and kind. Jesus gave up His life for us and wants us to do the same for others. Sacrificing things can be hard but just think what Jesus sacrificed for us.

**PRAYER:** Help us to remember this commandment when things go wrong in our life and what you sacrificed for us in love. Amen.



**GOOD  
FRIDAY**

Holy Saturday, March 30

**SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 4:13 (NRSVUE)**

until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

To me this verse is about a church, where the life of Jesus is taught. Not just talked about on Sunday mornings, but during the week serve as an example and draw everyone closer together, a time of construction. As we learn more about God and show His love to one another thru caring, food and clothing pantries, etc.

In Jeremiah 33:3 we're told "Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know." I have heard myself say many times, "I know that". Sometimes I do other times I don't, I need God's wisdom. It's a constant learning process. If wisdom came with age or maturity, I'd have it made. Boy, would I be smart. Maybe even able to move around more. With my arthritis I know I will never be on "Dancing With The Stars". The older I get the more I realize how much we are loved. To quote author, Jan Karon, "God loves us in spite of ourselves". In turn love God. It isn't just about leading a good, decent, respectable life but rather be an example of an adult Christian, someone in whom Christ lives again. A true church member.

**PRAYER:** Our Dear Heavenly Father: Thy will be done.  
**AMEN.**



**HOLY  
SATURDAY**



# EASTER SUNDAY

March 31, 2024

*He has told you, O mortal, what is good,  
and what does the LORD require of you  
but to do justice and to love kindness  
and to walk humbly with your God? -*

*Micah 6:8*



I remember Easter Sundays as a kid. Getting up to check what the Easter bunny left in our baskets. Getting dressed up in a stiff, brown Easter suit (it was the late 70s/early 80s). Going to church. Heading to Easter dinner with family afterwards, still dressed in that stiff, brown suit. Your Easters may have gone that way or maybe they still do today. Maybe the stiff suits don't happen anymore, but maybe there's still celebration, and family, and time together and all.

Where does Jesus fit into all this? After all, he did rise from the dead on that Easter morning so that not even the power of death itself can keep us from God's love and grace.

Jesus fits in to all of it...not only today, but also in the days that follow. Jesus fits in there when we live with a joy-filled response to the resurrection, out of the love and grace and hope and life that Jesus gave us that first Easter morning.

What about that joy-filled response though? Micah tells us what it could look like: doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly. Working for a just world, showing compassion toward all, and doing so while pointing toward Jesus. And when we respond to grace in these ways, we might just see Jesus in those we encounter.

May you have a blessed Easter! May you celebrate the resurrection with all the things your family and church love to do to celebrate. And may you continue to show Jesus to the least, lost, last and loneliest in the days to come, for in doing so, you will continue to see Jesus through the very same people. Amen!

“O cosmic Birther of all radiance and vibration, soften  
the ground of our being and carve out a space within  
us where your Presence can abide.

Fill us with your creativity so that we may be  
empowered to bear the fruit of your mission.

Let each of our actions bear fruit in accordance with  
our desire.

Endow us with the wisdom to produce and share what  
each being needs to grow and flourish.

Untie the tangled threads of destiny that bind us, as we  
release others from the entanglement of past  
mistakes.

Do not let us be seduced by that which would divert us  
from our true purpose, but illuminate the opportunities  
of the present moment.

For you are the ground and the fruitful vision, the birth,  
power, and fulfillment, as all is gathered and made  
whole once again.

And So It Is!”

Translated from Aramaic by the Nazarene Essenes

\*It is unusual in that it is translated directly from  
Aramaic as opposed to the traditional method, which is  
first translated into Greek from Aramaic, then  
translated into Latin, and then into English.

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

The Lenten Devotional for 2024 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.

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

