

Fifty Days of Easter 2017

Who doesn't like a good story? What about a great story? Have you ever thought of your life as a great story; the story of God's forgiveness of your sins and redemption of your life through the sacrifice of His Son and by the power of His resurrection?

During these next 7 weeks of Eastertide we will encourage you to:

1. Find your story in the death and resurrection of Jesus.
2. Tell your story of His resurrected life in you, and
3. Live your story as God, through His Holy Spirit, is transforming you from how He found you into what He is transforming you to be.

Additionally, there is one activity included for families each week of the seven weeks of Easter. Each of these activities was designed to enable families with young children to retell the story of the crucifixion and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Materials for each activity have been put together by Tammie Sawicki, who can also assist you in finding additional materials not included.

It is my hope that this devotional guide will unify our church and bless you and your family as we together celebrate the 50 days of Easter.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Terry McGugan', with a small cross symbol at the end of the signature.

Father Terry McGugan

THE DAILY DEVOTIONAL

1. OPENING ACCLAMATION and PRAYER

Easter Acclamation:

The Lord is risen

He is risen indeed

Prayer:

Almighty Father, who gave Your only Son to die for our sins and to rise for our justification: Give us grace that we may always serve You in pureness of living and truth; through Jesus Christ, Your Son our Lord. Amen.

2. READING for each day

3. PERSONAL REFLECTION OR FAMILY DISCUSSION

You may reflect upon or discuss how each daily episode from Acts continues the work of the Lord Jesus through your own life.

4. PERSONAL AND FAMILY PRAYER

5. LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name; Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

6. ENDING BLESSING

May Almighty God, who has redeemed us (me) and made us (me) His children (child) through the resurrection of His Son our Lord, bestow upon us (me) the riches of His blessing. Amen.

FIFTY DAYS OF EASTER

Week 1

Finding Your Story in His Resurrection

This first week we will examine those Scriptures that show us Jesus died, was buried, and bodily rose from the dead. Some in the Christian community have abandoned the truth of the physical bodily resurrection of our Lord and this is sad. Our story as believers begins with the Resurrection; for without His physical and bodily resurrection, His atoning death at the cross would have been for nothing. We will reflect upon the historical facts of the Resurrection that we, with confidence, may know that our Lord rose bodily and physically from the tomb.

Sunday, April 16, 2017 - Lectionary Reading for the Lord's Day

Jesus is risen from the dead.

Matthew 28:1-10

After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.' This is my message for you." So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

Monday, April 17, 2017

Christ died and was buried.

Matthew 27: 57-66

As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. Going to Pilate,

he asked for Jesus' body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him. Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb. The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate. "Sir," they said, "we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.' So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first." "Take a guard," Pilate answered. "Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how." So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard.

It is clear from this section of Matthew's gospel that Jewish leaders had heard that Jesus had said He would rise from the dead. Being concerned that this might be so, or that His disciples would steal the body and proclaim His resurrection, they begged Pilate to seal the tomb and post a guard. To this Pilate agreed and gave the authorities permission to make the tomb secure. It is interesting how they, sometimes like we, think that they can thwart the will of God with precautions to prevent what God has ordained. Death could not hold Jesus. A sealed tomb and a guard could not prevent the living Lord from fulfilling His word, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."

Tuesday, April 18, 2017

The soldiers reported the resurrection but were bribed to keep silent.

Matthew 28:11-15

While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, telling them, "You are to say, 'His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.' If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble." So the soldiers took the money and did as they were

instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day.

Can you imagine the effect of the sight--- early in the morning, before the dawn of the first day of the week, the terrifying angels descending, rolling back the stone, and the dead man emerging from His tomb--- had upon the pagan battle-tested soldiers guarding what they probably thought was a fool's errand? Nevertheless, instead of believing and worshipping the man they had unjustly accused, the chief priests and elders bought off the soldiers, promising their support with their commander and planted the rumor that a few of His disciples overcame the might of Rome and took the dead body of Jesus out of the tomb so that they could declare Him resurrected. No one questions an empty tomb on Easter morning. The only answers are that His body was stolen, or He revived from the cross and walked out on His own, or He is resurrected.

Wednesday, April 19, 2017

The Lord appeared to the disciples and proved He was physical, not a ghost.

Luke 24:36-48

While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence. He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.

In our world today, many will not believe Jesus bodily rose from the dead, but that the disciples had a sense that He rose. In a culture that believed in ghosts, it might be said that the disciples merely saw the ghost of Jesus. Some have suggested that the disciples merely experienced a mass hallucination. Luke records for us this incident in which Jesus invited the disciples to touch His body, to see His wounds. He ate with them to prove He was not a vision, not a ghost, but the risen Savior.

Thursday, April 20, 2017

Jesus appears to his disciples a third time.

John 21: 1-14

Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Galilee. It happened this way: Simon Peter, Thomas (also known as Didymus, Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. "I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We'll go with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?" "No," they answered. He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, "It is the Lord," he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards. When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.

Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught." So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was

raised from the dead.

Some of the disciples, not sure what to do following the Resurrection, evidentially returned to their original trade as fishermen. There along the shore of Galilee, Jesus met them and performed a miracle just like the one He had performed when He had first called them (Luke 5:1-11.) You'll recall from Luke's Gospel that He told the disciples to leave their nets and become fishers of men. How amazing is this passage from John! The resurrected Lord intervened once again in Galilee to remind His disciples their calling was to people, not to fish. The Resurrection changed the lives of His disciples forever. Like them, the resurrected Lord guides us and focuses our lives to His mission; that is, the salvation of the world through our testimonies.

Friday, April 21, 2017

The Lord was seen by many following His resurrection.

1 Corinthians 15:1 - 8

Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

Of the resurrection witnesses Paul is clear, writing perhaps 30 years after the Resurrection. Jesus appeared to Peter, then to the twelve, and to more than 500 men and women, who at that time, many were still living and able to personally testify that Jesus was alive. How many witnesses does it take before one can believe a fact? The fact that Jesus rose from the dead bodily and physically is historically well attested; and we believe today because of that testimony, just as Jesus had told Thomas on the second Sunday after the Resurrection.

Saturday, April 22, 2017

The Lord's final command to His disciples is to make disciples.

Matthew 28:16-20

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

There was Jesus on the mountainside in real flesh and blood, and yet some doubted. Doubted what? Doubted that Jesus was really with them? Doubted that He was not physical – a ghost? We can imagine that when He ascended into heaven there could have been few doubters, and certainly on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit breathed the church into being, there could have been few doubters.

St Augustine said, "Doubt is but another element of faith." Faith does not just believe it is working through our lingering doubts until, by God's Spirit, we believe. J. C. Ryle, the first Bishop of Liverpool once said, "Doubting does not prove that a man has no faith, but only that his faith is small. And even when our faith is small, the Lord is ready to help us."

Week 2

Finding Your Story in the meaning of His resurrection

This week we will read the Scriptures that explain to us the meaning of Christ's resurrection. How His resurrection has secured our redemption, brings us hope of the Resurrection and the promise of eternal life with Him.

Sunday, April 23, 2017 – Lectionary Reading for the Lord's Day

The Lord appears to the disciples and to Thomas.

John 20:19-31

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then

the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

Monday, April 24, 2017

If Christ is not raised we are still in our sins.

First Corinthians 15:12-19

"Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied."

How important is the bodily resurrection of Christ? Here in this passage from I Corinthians, Paul tells us that if Christ is not raised, we are still sinners and if as sinners we still believe in Christ, we should be pitied for we have believed a lie. But Christ is raised and our hope rests secure that He will resurrect our mortal bodies when He returns again. How does knowing that Christ is raised, we are forgiven, and that we have a place with Him forever impact the way we live now? How does the hope of our resurrection help us sift through the detritus of our failures, and reevaluate the importance of our goals in this life?

Tuesday, April 25, 2017

The Lord's resurrection is the assurance of our resurrection.

1 Corinthians 15:20-26

But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

Picking up the theme from yesterday, as we contemplate the words of the apostle, we are presented a view of the ultimate reality; that Christ will, at His return, bring forward His eternal kingdom, conquering all dominion, authority, and power, even death. The writer of Hebrews tells us, "Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity, so that by His death He might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death (Hebrews 2:14-15) Our fear of death is a normal human fear manipulated by Satan who gives it such great power over us. Jesus, through His death and resurrection, has conquered death and by His return will bring all things, even death, under His authority. George Whitfield, the 18th century Anglican preacher said, "Take care of your life and the Lord will take care of your death." So, let us then take care of our lives, doing those things the Lord has commanded, until we return to Him or until He returns to us.

Wednesday, April 26, 2017

The Lord's resurrection is proof that He is the divine Son of God.

Romans 1: 1-6

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God—the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his Son, who as to his earthly life was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord. Through him we received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith for his name's sake. And you also are among those Gentiles who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.

As a descendant from David, our Lord was a man, but through the Resurrection, He was shown to be the divine Son of God. Ponder that... God proved Jesus is His divine Son through the Resurrection. All who believe in Him belong to Him and through Him we receive grace from God the Father. Notice though that this grace must be shared with all so that they too may share in the grace that comes from obedience to Him. His resurrection compels us to tell others.

Thursday, April 27, 2017

The Resurrection provides assurance that we will live with Him.

Romans 6:5-9

For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

At Calvary, Jesus died. He took your sins and mine upon Himself. Our old self--the willful, prideful, rebellious self-- died on that mount. That self was crucified with Jesus, and now we are free from slavery to sin to serve Him instead. Think about this great intervention; our sinful self died with Him in His death that we may share in His life in His

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justified, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” What blessed words! We are brought into peace with Him by grace, not through anything we have done.

Week 3

Finding Your Story through the Benefits of His Resurrection

As we continue finding our stories through His resurrection, we will examine a few of the benefits of His resurrection in our daily living. As you think about these this week, consider how they inform your understanding of your calling as a Christian. Because Christ is risen from the dead, He has secured for us abundant blessings in this life and in the life to come.

Sunday, April 30, 2017 – Lectionary Reading for the Lord’s Day

Luke 24:13-35

Now on that same day two of Jesus' disciples were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, “What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?” They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?” He asked them, “What things?” They replied, “The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.” Then he said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?” Then beginning with

Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.” So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?” That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!” Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Monday, May 1, 2017

Salvation from the judgment and wrath of God through the Lord Jesus

Romans 10:9-13

If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. As Scripture says, “Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.” For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

Saved from what?, might be the question an unbeliever would pose. Saved from the judgment and punishment of God, would be the reply of a believer. How are we saved? We have already reflected upon the Scriptures that tell us what God has done through the death and resurrection of His Son. But what must one do to be saved? The answer here is so simple that it is nearly unbelievable; Confess Jesus as Lord, believe He is resurrected and call upon Him. That's it! Hearts that believe and souls that call upon Him will be rescued from the judgment of God – because Jesus was judged in your place and raised for your innocent acquittal.

Tuesday, May 2, 2017

The Indwelling of the Spirit and Resurrection Power

John 14:16-18 and 25-27

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.

“All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

Jesus has not left us as orphans to live His new life in this hostile world without His aid and comfort. No, He has sent His Holy Spirit, not to be with us, but to live in us. It is through Him – the Holy Spirit, that we are taught, and led, and granted His peace. We thank you Lord Jesus for not leaving us alone but filling us with Your very presence through Your Holy Spirit.

Wednesday, May 3, 2017

Our attitudes toward our bodies begin to change, because we no longer belong to just ourselves; we were purchased body and soul by Christ.

1 Corinthians 6:13-14 and 19-20

You say, “Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy them both.” The body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.

Not only do we have our Lord’s constant companionship through His indwelling Holy Spirit, but we are places of His residence, His temple. Not like a building made of stone, but a temple made of flesh. And when our bodies of flesh are laid aside, Jesus will resurrect them when He

returns in glory. Since this is so, and since we were purchased by His blood, we belong no longer to us, but to Him. How then do we honor God with our bodies? How do we live in this life as His very possession? Each of us must make a decision to live our lives in holiness and purity that reflects our Master's holiness and purity.

Thursday, May 4, 2017

We present our bodies as living sacrifices to God.

Romans 12:1-2

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

A sacrifice is a costly gift freely given. Before we knew Christ, our lives belonged to us alone, but now belong to Him. Our lives, our desires, our dreams, offered daily to Him; this is our primary form of worship. Worship is not so much a once-a-week Sunday event -- though it is that, too -- but is a daily life ordered under God's control and for His glory. As we engage in work or play, we do so offering ourselves to His service consciously and continually.

Friday, May 5, 2017

We are freed from the tyranny of sin.

Romans 6:12-14

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.

"But you're gonna have to serve somebody, yes indeed you're gonna have to serve somebody. Well, it may be the devil or it may be the Lord, but you're gonna have to serve somebody." These words, written and sung by Bob Dylan, get at the truth. We can serve God or our sinful selves. Because we are not under the Mosaic Law but under grace, it is

easy for us to get off track and return to our self-centered ways. But daily as we offer and re-offer our lives to God, the mastery that sin had over us becomes less and less and God's mastery over us becomes increasingly greater. This is our calling and our experience as we submit daily to Him, and this takes effort. Dallas Willard reminds us, "...it is crucial to realize that grace is not opposed to effort, but to earning."

Saturday, May 6, 2017

The resurrection gives us hope and an eternal inheritance.

Peter 1:3-4

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you.

A living hope is one of God's great gifts to us as we await the return of the Lord Jesus. Hope is not wishful thinking but a sure knowledge that the Lord can be trusted to fulfill His promises. Christian hope is trust. More than that, the resurrection of our Lord guarantees an inheritance that is eternal and kept for us until His return. None of us deserves this; we have not earned this promise through our good works. This is His promise given to us by His grace, out of His great love. Hold on to this hope, this trust, because He is faithful.

Week 4

Telling Your Story as a witness to His resurrection

Like the early Church, we are also witnesses of His resurrection; though perhaps not as eye-witnesses but as witnesses of our Savior's power, the presence of the Holy Spirit in us, and of a life that was once spiritually dead but now alive through our risen Lord. We are living witnesses as we grow in our relationship with the Living Lord. Through each of the examples we read this week, we will glean understanding about our own story with the Living Christ. As we tell our stories of resurrection, we do so with courage, truth, and conviction.

Sunday, May 7, 2017 – Lectionary Reading for the Lord's Day

Jesus is the One through Whom we are saved.

John 10:1-10

Jesus said, “Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.” Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

So again Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”

Monday, May 8, 2017

Our witness takes courage.

Acts 4:1-12

The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people, proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. They seized Peter and John and, because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day. But many who heard the message believed; so the number of men who believed grew to about five thousand. The next day the rulers, the elders and the teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. Annas the high priest was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and others of the high priest’s family. They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: “By what power or what name did you do this?” Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: “Rulers and elders of the people! If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a man who was lame and are being asked how he was healed, then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that

this man stands before you healed. Jesus is “ ‘the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone.’ Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.”

The setting for our reading is that of a lame man, at the entrance to the temple who, through the ministration of Peter and John and by the power of the resurrected Lord, was healed. Excitement filled the Temple as worshipers gathered around the miraculous event. Peter used this opportunity to preach the meaning of the death and resurrection of the Lord. Three thousand of the hearers believed right then and there. However, the very men who had authorized Jesus’ murder and paid off the Roman guards at the tomb, found Peter and John proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus and they were outraged. Jailed that night and hauled before the Sanhedrin the next day, they were called to give an account for the healing.

Peter and John are great examples of Christians who are caught doing something good and have to explain their actions to a hostile audience. Perhaps you have never had such an experience. But, when we are faithful to God’s calling in our lives and good fruit result, non-believers who are aware often want to know why. That’s when we get caught. When Peter and John were caught, the example set by these apostles is the guide to our actions. They did not back off, they were not afraid of the consequences of stating the truth – that the resurrected Lord had healed the man. And then to add to that, Peter boldly declared, “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.” May God give us courage, when caught, to remain faithful to the Gospel proclamation.

Tuesday, May 9, 2017

Our witness is truthful.

Acts 2:22-24

“Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God’s deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.

The setting for this reading is the day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit entered into all gathered and they began speaking in tongues. Some of the observers mocked the disciples of Jesus, claiming they had partied too much. But Peter used this opportunity to correct the mockers and proclaim the death and resurrection of the Lord. Peter again sets an example for when others mock your faith; this provides the opportunity to explain, with charity, why you believe. Some may mock the faith but they cannot deny your witness. Let us be bold as we live our lives in witness to our Lord.

Wednesday, May 10, 2017

Our witness continues in our normal practice of faith even in difficult situations.

Acts 16:25-40

About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone's chains came loose. The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!" The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household."

Imprisoned, Paul and Silas did what was natural for them, singing praises and offering prayers to God. They did not know what would become of them in the morning nor did they know that God was about to intervene in their situation. When the jail was shaken and the doors came open and the chains fell off, they did not flee, but stayed. Through their witness of doing the right thing, even though falsely charged, the jailer became a believer. They become an example to us of living faith publically, which God used for His glory. Simple acts of charity and blessing to others may be used by God to bring others to Christ. We never know who God is calling through our public living out of our faith.

Thursday, May 11, 2017

Our witness engages others.

Acts 16:13-15

On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. "If you consider me a believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us.

We can't wait for them to come to us, we must go to them. This is the lesson we learn from Paul and Silas, who on the Sabbath went to the riverside near Philippi to pray. When there was no synagogue in a town, it was the custom that Jewish residents would gather by a river to worship God. Whether Paul and Silas expected to find worshipers or were just keeping the custom, we do not know. Nevertheless they came upon a group of women at the riverside, and seizing the opportunity they began a discussion with them. During the conversation, the heart of Lydia was opened to the Gospel message and became a believer. So, our witness cannot be kept to ourselves, but shared with others. We can never know whose hearts the Lord will open through our faithfulness. Mother Teresa of Calcutta said, "God does not require that we be successful, only that we be faithful." Let us be faithful to share our witness with others.

Friday, May 12, 2017

Our witness may cause a bit of "holy unruliness".

Acts 5: 27-32

The apostles were brought in and made to appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest. "We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name," he said. "Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood." Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than human beings! The God of our ancestors raised Jesus from the dead—whom you killed by hanging him on a cross. God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might bring Israel to repentance and forgive their sins. We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him."

The apostles were proclaiming the Gospel right within the temple complex and many believed in the Lord and some were healed. This infuriated the leaders of the Jews, who had the apostles thrown into prison. But in the night, an angel of the Lord opened the jail doors and told them to return to the temple and to continue their preaching. How ironic, the next morning the apostles were not found in the jail but in the temple itself! The leaders quickly brought them to trial and commanded them to no longer preach in Jesus' name. Refusing to obey them, the apostles took a stand and engaged in a bit of civil disobedience. They knew that obedience to God is the life they had chosen and remained steadfast, unthreatened by the religious power of the day. Their singlemindedness to obey the command of Jesus is an example for us to be willing to engage in a bit of holy unruliness too. In our culture, we have often heard that it is boorish to publically talk about politics or religion. Sometimes, though, we must also take a stand to obey God rather than man or woman; unafraid of what others think, risking being treated as a social pariah.

Saturday, May 13, 2017

Our witness is Christ's command.

Acts 10:39-43

We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a cross, but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen—by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

We are witnesses too. We witness to what we know and have experienced from the hand of our Lord. We may not be called to preach, we may not be gifted as evangelists, but we each have a story of God's redeeming grace and of His continued care for us. We all are His witnesses of what we know; that is all He asks of you. As you contemplate your story this Easter Season, you can refine that into a short and powerful witness of Christ. What story can you share with others who do not yet know Him?

Week 5

Telling Your Story as an Expression of Love and Concern for Others

Sunday, May 14, 2017 – Lectionary Reading for the Lord's Day

The Lord has prepared a place for you.

John 14:1-14

Jesus said, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going." Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."

Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it."

Monday, May 15, 2017

We are reconciled to God and offer reconciliation to others.

2 Corinthians 5: 17-21

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's

sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

God reconciled us to Him. We did nothing but respond to His offer of salvation, that's it! Yet God has placed into our hands and our mouths this message of reconciliation to be shared with those still estranged from Him. As an ambassador, we carry His message to others; for He implores to the lost, through our testimony, to be reconciled to God! May our hearts be so full of love for the lost that we never fail to take an opportunity to implore others to receive the forgiving grace of God.

Tuesday, May 16, 2017

The love of Christ compels us to tell others.

2 Corinthians 5: 14-15

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

Jesus told us the gateway to destruction is broad and many will find it, but the gateway to life is narrow and few will find it. Think about that; the eternal destiny of many will be eternal death, removed from the presence of the Living God. How can we bear to see those, whom God loves, die without Christ and without hope, only to face the judgment of God? No, God's love compels us to pray for and reach out to sinners. For the sake of love, will you share your story with those you know are not yet His? May God help us see the urgency of our witness for Him.

Wednesday, May 17, 2017

Through the Holy Spirit's work in us, we are gradually being transformed into the image of Jesus.

2 Corinthians 3: 17-18

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

Little by little God is transforming you into the very likeness of Christ; though very few of us are aware of this transformation. In the perfect freedom of the Lord, through His personal relationship with you, and by the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life, with your willingness to change, God is making you fit for heaven. As we are transformed, our witness for Christ becomes increasingly obvious to all because we take on His character and His priorities. May others see not you, but Christ who lives in and transforms you.

Thursday, May 18, 2017

Suffering is often the means through which God shapes us into holy people.

2 Timothy 1: 8-10

So do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner. Rather, join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God. He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

Social pressure and social taboos--our socially tacit agreement not to offend-- frequently keep us silent, do they not? Our fear of others, our fear of rejection, become powerful tools of this age to keep us silent, unobjectionable, and therefore ineffective as witnesses. When we share our stories of grace, of God's faithfulness, of God's reconciliation, we take part in a story that began before time. God has through Christ destroyed death and brought life and immortality through the Gospel entrusted to us. Therefore, "do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord."

Friday, May 19, 2017

We need to be always ready to share our hope in Christ.

1 Peter 3:13-16

Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened." But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord.

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

If our hearts truly revere Christ as Lord, then He commands our destiny. Nothing will occur that He does not ordain. And if we suffer for doing what is right, this is a blessing from our Father; though suffering rarely feels like a blessing at the time. With this confidence, we are not afraid to do His bidding. We are not afraid to share our stories or to share with others the reason for our hope. But we do this with gentleness, and respect out of God's compelling love for the souls of those with whom we share.

Saturday, May 20, 2017

Never be discouraged that our stories sometimes fall on seemingly “deaf ears”.

2 Corinthians 4:3-7

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ.

But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.

Perhaps you have had the experience of sharing your story only for it to fall flat upon your hearers. This is most discouraging. We must remember that not all will gladly receive the Good News. This is the experience of our Lord. He, the Son, was rejected by many. Satan has blinded the eyes of many so that they cannot see the light of the Gospel. This must not discourage us from sharing our stories with others. Knowing that some will hear with joy, and some with disgust, and some with disinterest must not keep us from speaking the truth. God knows who you are, just an earthen vessel, incapable on your own

to change others with your story, but He has filled your vessel with the power of His Holy Spirit. We cannot convince others, but He can. Therefore we boldly tell our stories to whoever will listen, and leave to God the rest.

Week 6

Living Your Story as a Transforming Person Showing the Marks of Being Christ's

Because He is risen, we are even now in the process of transformation from our old life in sin to our new life in freedom and holiness. As we continue our stories, we recall how God, through His Holy Spirit, is changing us inside out slowly and continually. As we live our stories, we demonstrate the power of the Resurrection daily in increasing fullness. We are marked as Christ's own forever.

Sunday, May 21, 2017 – Lectionary Reading for the Lord's Day

John 14:15-21

Jesus said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you." "I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them."

Monday, May 22, 2017

A Life of Love

Romans 12:9-21

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice;

mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

What are the marks of a Christian? Love is the most evident; love that is sincere and devoted to one another, love that serves without the expectation of reward. As we grow in our faith and relationship with Jesus, we take on His character and love begins to grow within our hearts. Love is not a feeling we express for others, but a disposition of care for the wellbeing of others, followed with works of love. We see this clearly in the reading today. May we grow in love for one another and for those who are lost.

Tuesday, May 23, 2017

A Life of Hope

Romans 5:2b-5

And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

What are the marks of a Christian? Hope marks the life of a Christian; not the "hope springs eternal" kind of hope. That is cockeyed optimism – there's nothing wrong about optimism – but that is not Christian hope. The hope Christ gives is a knowing, deep inside, that all things are under His control, and that His promises will be fulfilled. In fact, Christian hope is our assurance that He will return, bring His kingdom, and resurrect us to eternal life with Him; that is our hope. How is your hope today?

Wednesday, May 24, 2017

A Life of Obedience

2 Corinthians 10:3-5

For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

What are the marks of a Christian? Obedience marks the life of a Christian. We work to eradicate any thinking that does not submit to the truth of the Gospel. We abandon those philosophies that oppose God's truth and we make our own thoughts captive to obedience to Christ. Through the Scriptures and the work of His Holy Spirit, our Lord tells us His truth and provides us with His will for us. It is therefore incumbent upon each believer to actively take a stand against anything not of the truth, and submit our thinking and lives to Him and to His kingdom.

Thursday, May 25, 2017

A Life of Mercy

Jude 20-23

But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life. Be merciful to those who doubt; save others by snatching them from the fire; to others show mercy, mixed with fear—hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.

What are the marks of a Christian? Mercy to others marks our daily living, taking pity upon those not yet enlightened by the gospel. It is easy to be offended by the hubris of others, but we must respond with mercy, recognizing they are lost and blind. It is interesting, isn't it, that we are called to snatch some "from the fire" – what does that mean? To be bold, out of mercy, to proclaim the Gospel to those who doubt. Living mercifully as we await God's mercy is our calling.

Friday, May 26, 2017

A Life of Generosity

1 Timothy 6:17-19

As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly

provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.

What are the marks of a Christian? A generous spirit marks a Christian. Wealth is relative and those who seek it never have enough. Those who want it are never satisfied. Even the poor in this country are wealthier by far than the poor in the Third World. God, who has blessed us with all, calls us to freely share from our resources, whether great or small, with others who have less and with an attitude of joy. Alistair Begg says, "Hold material goods and wealth on a flat palm and not in a clenched fist." A generous spirit recognizes the generosity of God toward us and an opportunity to lay our treasures in heaven. St. Augustine reminds us, "Where your pleasure is, there is your treasure; where your treasure is, there is your heart; where your heart is, there is your happiness."

Saturday, May 27, 2017

A Life of Forgiveness

Ephesians 4:32

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Forgiveness marks the life of a Christian. We pray with our mouths, "forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." Yet, do we really let go? Do we really let go of the offenses, hurts, and grudges we hold against others? If we insist on justice, or demand our rights – which is a very American thing to do – we may find ourselves in opposition to the Lord. Jesus said, "But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you." (Luke 6:27-28) As Christ followers, we forgive as God has forgiven us and we pray for those who have offended us. That lifestyle uniquely marks a Christian being transformed by the Holy Spirit.

Week 7

Telling Your Story through the Transforming Work of the Holy Spirit

Sunday, May 28, 2017 – Lectionary Reading for the Lord's Day

John 17:1-11

Jesus looked up to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed.

"I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one."

Monday, May 29, 2017

A Life of Sharing the Gospel

2 Timothy 4:1-2

I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.

Sharing the gospel marks a Christian. Do you remember when you first fell in love? Did you hold that in to yourself or did you tell others? We are in love with Christ; how can we hold that in to ourselves? No, a Christian in love with Jesus can't help but tell others. So, let us not hold this inside but, "shout it from the rooftops (Matthew 10:27.) Well, that may not be your style, but don't be afraid to tell others, so that they can love Jesus too.

Tuesday, May 30, 2017

A Life of Joy

1 Peter 1:8-9

Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Joy marks the life of a Christian, that deep fount of joy that you know the living God and He knows you. Sometimes we confuse happiness with joy. Happiness is situational. Joy is a gift planted deep inside. It is a resolute contentment knowing that the Lord commands our destiny, that He is always present. It is the present working of our salvation in our lives. Though we may face difficulties and tragedies in life, yet we are filled with joy.

Wednesday, May 31, 2017

A Life of Service

1 Peter 4:10-11

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

Service to better the lives of others is a mark of being Christ's. The Holy Spirit of God gives to each believer spiritual gifts to fulfill each one's place within the body of Christ. Those gifted with service do so effectively with the strength that God supplies. Yet those of us not gifted with service still have opportunities to serve our Lord by serving others. Jesus said, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45.) If this is true of our Lord, then it is true of us His servants. So, when an opportunity presents itself, let us serve others with joy.

Thursday, June 1, 2017

A Life of Prayer

Philippians 4: 5-7

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about

anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Withdrawal from the commotion and demands of our lives, even for a few minutes, just to be alone with the Father, marks a Christian life. As we mature in Christ and as the Holy Spirit transforms us, prayer becomes much less asking God for things or intercession for others – though petition and intercession are always appropriate. Prayer increasingly becomes dialogue and time for resting in His presence, a time of heartfelt thanks. Andrew Murray said, “Prayer is not monologue, but dialogue. God’s voice in response to mine is its most essential part.” Prayer is the vehicle through which we commune with Him as He with us. And there, in that communion, our hearts are set at peace.

Friday, June 2, 2017

A Life of Humility

Philippians 2:5-8

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!

Humility marks a Christian life. As we look at our Lord, Who knew Who He was-- the Creator, Sustainer, the Eternal Son-- yet He laid aside all this for His love for us. He was born a helpless baby, targeted as a rebel rouser to the established elite of Jerusalem, and crucified as a criminal. What a descent, from the glory of heaven to a cold and dark tomb! We are called to the same mindset. Though we know who we are, children of the Father, adopted as children, we must also live in humility as Christ did. We do not use our position with God as an opportunity for judging, but for mercy. When we are excluded, we bless; when treated unfairly, we pray; when we are confronted, we listen. We who are in Christ are secure; those outside of Christ, not so much. Therefore we can, like Christ, live humbly with others while knowing we are God’s very precious children.

Saturday, June 3, 2017

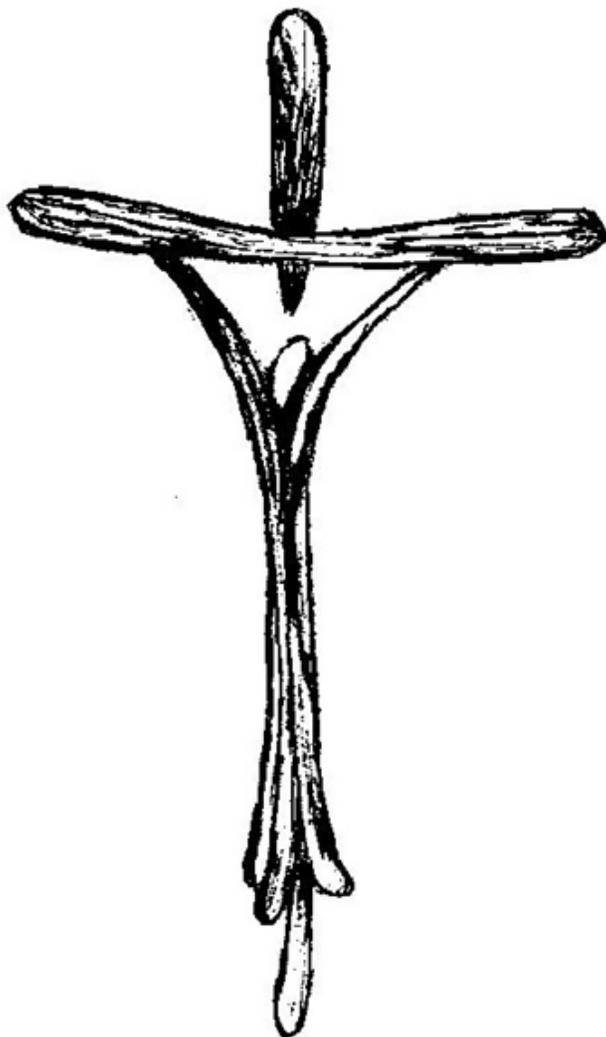
A Life of Power

Philippians 3:10-12

I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.

Tomorrow is Pentecost, the day the church was born. At its birth, the Holy Spirit came into the believers to take residence as Jesus promised, and gave them power for the task of telling a lost world of the death and resurrection of the Lord. This same power lives in us. With the Apostle Paul, we too want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection so that we may serve Him as He brings forward His kingdom. However, that comes with death--death to the self, to my own way, to those things I think are most important, and finally the releasing of my life into His care. Am I willing to die that I may live?



These materials are provided by the Christian Formation Ministry of Christ Church Denver. It is our prayer that these devotions will bless you and your families during this season of Lent.

If you have any questions or comments, please direct these to Phil Sorensen or Tammie Sawicki. We would love to hear how this devotional assisted you in private or family worship during this season.



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