

Devotions for the Week of March 18, 2018
5th Sunday of Lent
North East United Methodist Church
By Rev. Dr. Drew M. Christian

Sunday, March 18, 2018

Read Luke 4: 1-13; Psalm 91: 1-2, 9-16.

As we approach the Holiest of weeks, I thought we would journey back through the scriptures, through the weekly devotions, remembering what we have learned...preparing to watch and walk with Jesus as He enters Jerusalem triumphantly, washes the disciples' feet, prays in the garden, is beaten and made to carry His cross, is crucified on Golgotha, and is buried. May we prepare our hearts to receive such a sacrifice, such love, such a willingness to give everything so that we might have a relationship with our Heavenly Father, that we might stand forgiven.

We followed Jesus into the desert where He was tempted by Satan. Satan tempts Jesus with bread, to fill His hunger with the things of the world. Satan tempts Jesus to take things into His own hands, put Himself at the center of things, to jump off the temple and show the world right now that He is the Messiah. And Satan tempts Jesus with fame and worldly power. Many of these are the same temptations Satan still uses today on each of us. Jesus fights these temptations and God sends angels to minister to Him. Jesus is able to leave the wilderness strengthened, closer to God, His Heavenly

Father, having leaned on Him and sought Him in the midst of temptation and trials.

Lent is a time for us to enter the wilderness. These forty days are a time to not simply give up a certain food or hobby...these forty days are a time to fight with our pride, our gossip, our hatred of others, our prejudices, our unwillingness to listen to someone who differs from us...it is a time to wrestle with the toughest issues...it is time to look at what is in our "*history*" when it comes to surfing the internet, how we treat our wives and if we are fulfilling our roles as Godly men, how much time we are spending in prayer and the Bible. This is a season where we are to wrestle with the serious issues in our lives that are holding us back from growing into the likeness of Jesus Christ.

I pray that through this Lenten season you have grown, you have learned, you have wrestled with sin, and turned to find your Heavenly Father running to you. Take time tonight to give God thanks and ask God what it is you need to continue to work on and wrestle with. Ask God what temptation is Satan throwing at you that you need to seek His help for, that you need to fight so you might be more like His Son, Jesus Christ. Dive into His Word over the next week. Read the scriptures for each day and read the Passion Story...Luke 22:14-23:56...reflecting on Christ's sacrifice for you.

Monday, March 19, 2018

Read Luke 13: 31-35; Romans 10: 8b-13.

Next, in our weekly devotions, we spoke of the longing in Christ's voice as He looked over Jerusalem and

cried out, *“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing.”*

Jesus' words mirror God's actions throughout history. Over and over again, God reached out to the people of Israel, and through them to the world. Over and over again, God would seek and search His people out, making covenant with them, calling on them to keep their side of the bargain, and promising to be with them always. God would enter their lives in a mighty way, through the Word, through miracles, through the prophets, and when the people strayed away, when they forgot, God would reach out to them again and attempt to pull them back under His wings. Jesus stands before Jerusalem, the Holy City, the center of Israel and its faith, and cries out, *“Why... Why do you not see the One who loves you so...Why do you continue to push Him away...How can you not know how loved you are?”*

I can hear the same longing in the heart of the father whose son took his inheritance and ran off to a far-away land. God is calling out to you and to me...*“softly and tenderly”* calling... yearning, longing for us to be in relationship with Him; yet, so many ignore the calling, avoid the whispers, reject His amazing love.

Take time tonight to continue to pray for those you know who do not know, have not accepted, have even rejected, God's amazing love. And if you have rejected His love, if you have strayed away, if you are not willing to

have God gather you in His arms or come into certain aspects and areas of your life, why not surrender...Why not tell God that even though the *“spirit is willing, the flesh is weak”* ...Ask God to help you surrender, to come into His full embrace...to have leadership over all of your decisions and actions.

Tuesday, March 20, 2018

Read Luke 13: 1-9; Isaiah 55: 1-9.

The next week's devotions spoke of sin...how we must stop looking at others, passing judgment on them, and instead look in the mirror and come face-to-face with our own ugliness, our own sinfulness.

In this week's scripture, Jesus tries to get the people to take their focus off those who were killed by Pilate and died when the tower of Siloam fell, and instead look inward at themselves and face what holds them back, keeps them separated from a Holy and Just God. Jesus wants the people to realize what John Newton, slave trader and author of *“Amazing Grace,”* discovered, *“My memory is nearly gone; but I remember two things; That I am a great sinner, and that Christ is a great Savior.”*

Jesus reminds us that when tragedy strikes it should be a wake-up call for those who are left behind...a wake-up call to get our hearts right with God, to recognize our own sin and that our time to leave this earth could come at any moment...and recognizing our sin before a Holy God... Repent... Acts 3:19 (NKJV), *“Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that*

times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.”

Lent is a time to repent...to seek forgiveness...to tell God we are “*sorry*” for the things we have done which are contrary to Him, and for the things we have failed to do which He asks of us. Take time tonight to seek His face, to ask for forgiveness, and know that your prayers are heard. God, in all His compassion and mercy, forgives our sins and cleanses us, making us “*whiter than snow.*” And for that we give God thanks and we strive to live lives that honor His name.

Wednesday, March 21, 2018

Read Luke 15: 1-3, 11b-32.

In last week’s devotions we traveled the road with the Prodigal Son, and we watched as the Father, lifted his robes and ran to meet him, throwing his arms around his son, lavishing him with kisses and gifts, and welcoming him home, forgiven, reconciled.

At some point, hopefully one recognizes the longing God has to know each of us personally...once we sense the longing, the yearning God has to know us, we come face-to-face with our own ugliness, our sin...and we realize we cannot stand in the presence of a Holy God...but Jesus reminds us that the moment we admit our sin, the moment we turn toward home, repentant and humble, seeking a relationship with our Heavenly Father, our God runs to us and embraces us; there is forgiveness, grace, life.

The father in Jesus' story shames himself by running to his son, the son that the entire town would have known rebelled and shamed his father. And why does the father run to his son? It would have been typical that one who had shamed his father, who had sinned, who returned in rags, smelling of pigs, would be ridiculed, taunted, and even beaten by the townspeople. By running to him, he cannot only protect his son from physical harm, but he turns the taunts and ridicule on himself, legs exposed, shameful...the father takes the scorn. Isn't this what Jesus did for us?

As John MacArthur writes, *"...that father is doing exactly what Jesus did...exactly what He did. He came down into our village to run the gauntlet and bear the shame and the slander and the mockery to throw His arms around us and kiss us and reconcile with us."*

Tonight, I pray you reflect once more on such amazing love...such grace...Titus 3:5, *"He saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit."* The son doesn't have to work his way back...He, like us, simply needs to accept the love the Father offers.

Thursday, March 22, 2018

Read John 12: 1-8.

This week, let us look as Mary *"took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet and wiped them with her hair."* Jesus praised her for her sacrifice, her devotion.

We recognize that God is calling, seeking, yearning to know us, to have a relationship. We realize that we are sinners in need of a great Savior and we want the relationship God is offering us. We turn toward home, repentant, finding our Heavenly Father “*lifting His robes*” and running to meet us, to embrace us. And then we, out of gratitude, out of devotion, out of love for the One who loved us, sacrifice ourselves, give unconditionally, worship extravagantly...willing to give up anything, willing to do “*whatever it takes,*” to serve and love our God, to serve and love the Savior. Like Mary we pour our lives out as an offering at Jesus feet, saying “*Thank you...I love you...I worship you.*”

What are you willing to sacrifice for Jesus? What are you willing to “*give up*” in order to reach more people for Him, to serve Him? How are you pouring your life out in service to God, to His Church?

Pray that God will show you how you might serve and love His people...how you might reach others, helping them know Him personally...how you might live in such a way that shows God how grateful you are for His mercy and grace.

Friday, March 23, 2018

Read John 12:1-8; Luke 19:28-40; & Luke 23:1-49.

Again, read the passion story, from the moment of Jesus’ triumphal entry to Jesus’ crucifixion and burial. Read again how Mary anointed Jesus’ feet with expensive perfume, foreshadowing His death and burial. Prepare your heart for Holy Week, for Palm/Passion Sunday, Holy

Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday. Read of Jesus' sacrifice, His love, His willingness to give up His life for our sakes...but know that Sunday's coming... Sunday's coming...and with it the resurrection, with it new life!

Take time tonight to simply pray, to sit with God, to sit with Jesus. Take time to reflect on such love, such sacrifice. Take time to stare at the cross, to see your sins hanging there, to see the look of love in Jesus' eyes for you. And give God thanks.

Saturday, March 24, 2018

Read and Reflect on the Scriptures for the Fifth

*Sunday in Lent: Jeremiah 31:31-34; Psalm 51:1-12;
Hebrews 5:5-10; John 12:20-33.*

Take Time Again to Read and Reflect On:

INVITATION TO THE OBSERVANCE OF LENTEN DISCIPLINE

How Are You Observing a Holy Lent?

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ: the early Christians observed with great devotion the days of our Lord's passion and resurrection, and it became the custom of the Church that before the Easter celebration there should be a forty-day season of spiritual preparation. During this season converts to the faith were prepared for Holy Baptism. It was also a time when persons who had committed serious sins and had separated themselves from the community of faith were reconciled by penitence and

forgiveness and restored to participation in the life of the Church. In this way, the whole congregation was reminded of the mercy and forgiveness proclaimed in the gospel of Jesus Christ and the need we all have to renew our faith. I invite you, therefore, in the name of the Church, to observe a holy Lent: by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God's Holy Word. To make a right beginning of repentance, as a mark of our mortal nature, let us now bow before our Creator and Redeemer in a moment of silence and reflection.

***“Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.”***

-Psalm 51:10

Be in prayer tonight, join a small group, read and study the weekly devotions, pray, & serve. Live out your commitment to God and the Church.

*Don't Forget to
Invite Someone to Church Tomorrow!*

To Contact or Set An Appointment With Pastor Drew...

Cell Phone: 302-841-2569

Email: drewmchristian@icloud.com