

**North East UMC/Devotions for Week of August 27, 2017**  
**Lessons From Shenandoah: STEP ACROSS**  
**By Rev. Dr. Drew M. Christian**

**Sunday, August 27, 2017**

**Read I Peter 4: 10-11; Galatians 5: 13-14; John 13: 1-17;  
Luke 22: 24-27.**

*“LOVING [them] sacrificially as Christ loved us.”* On the night Jesus was arrested He sat with His disciples and kneeling, Jesus washed their dirty feet. The King of Kings, the Bright Morning Star, the Savior, knelt and washed the mud and sweat off the feet of his disciples...including one who would betray Him...one who would deny Him...all but one who would abandon Him hours later.

Jesus says, *“Do you understand what I was doing? You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and you are right, because that’s what I am. And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other’s feet. I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you.”*

Jesus has given us the example. We are called to love others sacrificially as  
Christ loved us. As Paul writes in Galatians, *“For the whole law can be summed up in this one command: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”* Jesus tells His disciples that they will be different...those who follow Him will be different from the world...Jesus says, *“But among you it will be different. Those who are the greatest among you should take the lowest rank, and the leader should be like a servant.”*

How often we are more about being served than serving others...How often we fail to use our gifts to serve others rather than ourselves. Christ challenges us to *“love others sacrificially”*...to serve...and through our service, witness for God. How are you following Christ’s example, washing the feet of others? How are you loving your neighbor as yourself? How are you “stepping across” the chasms that exist between you and others? Who might God be nudging you to love sacrificially as Christ loved you?

**Monday, August 28, 2017**

**Read Luke 5: 27-32 and Luke 7: 34.**

Unlike many of the pictures we see of Jesus where he is ministering to men and women like ourselves or asking the little children to come to Him, Jesus was criticized by others for eating and drinking with, as the New Living Translation puts it, *“scum.”* He had gained a reputation as a *“glutton”* and a *“drunkard.”* Yet, Jesus continued to reach out to the destitute, the homeless, the criminal, the prostitute, the poor.

Jesus continued to reach out to people, love them, and walk with them. There was no one Jesus did not see to be a child of His Father God in heaven. Today, Jesus would have lunch with people of different color & beliefs, walk with people radically different, people who would be considered ungodly.

How often do we judge our neighbor and instead of ministering to them, being with them, we allow ourselves to feel superior in our walk with the Lord and/or we turn away from the person that is very different than we are. Is there a time you did not welcome someone into the church or your home because they were different, because you judged them? Is there someone you are not spending time with now because they are different? Where in your community is the message of Jesus not being preached due to fear/unfair judgment? Remember, Jesus said, *“Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, my servant also will be.”*

Pray that God will help you become more and more like Jesus, allowing you to “step across” and see all people as children of the Most High God.

**Tuesday, August 29, 2017**

**Read Mark 9: 33-35; Philippians 2: 1-11.**

St. Augustine wrote, *“Humility is the foundation of all the other virtues hence, in the soul in which this virtue does not exist there cannot be any other virtue except in mere appearance.”* Thomas Merton described humility by saying, *“Pride makes us artificial and humility makes us real.”*

Jesus made it very clear, when the disciples argued over who was the greatest, *“Whoever wants to be first must take last place and be the servant of everyone else.”* Paul tells us in Philippians that we must count others as more significant than ourselves...we must be like Jesus who *“humbled Himself in obedience to God.”* I love how The Message translation describes how Jesus humbled Himself. Paul writes, *“[Jesus] set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became human! Having become human, he stayed human. It*

was an incredibly humbling process. He didn't claim special privileges. Instead, he lived a selfless, obedient life and then died a selfless, obedient death..."

How often do you find yourself battling with pride? St. Augustine wrote, "It was pride that changed angels into devils; it is humility that makes men as angels." How might your life look different if you lived it with a sense of humility, recognizing your own defects, willingly submitting your life to God, attempting to live after the example of Christ? How might you see, treat, and love others differently if you began to see them as Jesus sees them, more important than one's self, precious to God?

Spend time in prayer and ask God to show you any pride that might rear its ugly head in your life and relationships, and to give you a humble heart modeled after His Son Jesus.

### **Wednesday, August 30, 2017**

**Read Matthew 6: 14-15; Ephesians 4: 17-32;**

**Luke 6: 36-38; Matthew 18: 21-35**

"...by loving others sacrificially as Christ loved us." Certainly, in order to love others as Christ loved us, we must learn to forgive. Someone once said that the most difficult word in the Bible is "AS"... "forgive us our trespasses AS we forgive those who trespass against us." Jesus makes it very clear, "If you forgive people their sins, your Father in heaven will forgive your sins also...If you do not forgive people their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins." Jesus makes this point clear in His parable of the unmerciful servant.

Alexander Pope stated, "To err is human; to forgive, divine." Not only are we to forgive someone once who wrongs us...but we must be willing to forgive an infinite number of times. Lewis Smedes, in his book, The Art of Forgiving, explains that as human beings we will have lapses, the hurt and bitterness we once felt will come back even after we believe we have forgiven the person. During these times we need to repeat the words "I forgive" until once again the bitterness and resentment loses its bite.

Smedes also explains that forgiveness does not mean "welcoming back the relationship we had before" and "forgiveness does not require us to reunite with the person who broke our trust" or put up with hurtful behavior. We should protect ourselves from being hurt again; more importantly we must protect our hearts from bitterness. We are called to "walk...in stride with the forgiving God," "imitating His style." Ask God for the strength to forgive and to love like His Son.

### **Thursday, August 31, 2017**

**Read I Corinthians 1:18; Luke 23: 26-34.**

Paul writes in I Corinthians 1:18 (NIV), "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." In the cross we see what it is to LOVE COMPLETELY, to "STEP ACROSS". Christ showed us the most powerful demonstration of love when He hung between earth and sky, allowing His hands and feet to be pierced...in the cross we find the power to love others...for on our own power it is impossible to LOVE COMPLETELY...but with God's power...we can love as Christ loved.

It is only by looking to the cross...remembering the example Jesus set for each of us..."Forgive them Father, for they know not what they do"...It is only through the power of God, the Holy Spirit, that we will be able to love as Jesus loved...sacrificially and unconditionally.

Reflect on Jesus asking His Heavenly Father from the cross to forgive those who had hammered the nails and hung Him on a cross. Reflect on the depth of such forgiveness, such love. Ask God to help you love like His Son, to forgive like His Son.

## **Friday, September 1, 2017**

### **Read Romans 15:7; Colossians 3:13; Ephesians 4: 31-32.**

Every one of us has been hurt when someone else has wronged us. And it's so easy when you're hurt in a relationship to build this mountain of bitterness around your heart to protect yourself from being hurt again...this mountain of bitterness poisons your relationship...C.S. Lewis wrote, *"To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even to an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket- safe, dark, motionless, airless--it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable."*

We must allow for one another's mistakes...We must show grace when those we care about, when our neighbors, when our pastor, messes up...We must not allow bitterness to build up when others let us down...this bitterness will eat away at us, slowly destroying us.

F.B. Meyer wrote, *"As we pour out our bitterness, God pours in His peace."* Are you holding bitterness against someone in your family, in the church, in the community? Tonight, pray for them. Don't pray that they will come to see they are wrong and apologize; simply pray that God would bless them, would touch their hearts. Pray for them daily until God takes all the bitterness away. Trust God with the relationship, with the situation. Trust that God can bring good out of what has been hurtful and painful. As Jerry Bridges writes, *"Bitterness arises in our hearts when we do not trust in the sovereign rule of God in our lives."*

## **Saturday, September 2, 2017**

### **Read I John 3:16.**

Christ showed us what the power of love was about when He went to the cross, and then He tells us that we're to love other people in our lives like that. We're to lay down our lives, our selfishness... lay down our wants and desires and meet the needs of others first... serve others before we serve ourselves...forgive our brothers and sisters, sincerely and without reservation.

Don't put it off any longer...It is time to write that letter...It is time to make that phone call...It is time to cherish the people God has placed in your life...It is time serve your neighbor...to adore your spouse...to talk with your children...It is time to forgive, truly forgive, those who have wronged you, to let the bitterness go...It is time to ask forgiveness from those whom you have wronged, to admit your mistakes...It is time to push "self" out of the way...It is time to love our brothers and sisters in Christ at North East United Methodist Church, and throughout our community as Christ loves us...It is time to reach out to those who need to feel acceptance, who need to experience the love of Jesus Christ...It is time to LOVE COMPLETELY...It is time to "STEP ACROSS" whatever chasm exists between you and another...TODAY...NOW...Not some day...TODAY!

Ask God to give you strength. Ask God to lay the name of someone on your heart you can reach out to today. And remember to invite someone to church tomorrow so they might hear of God's grace and love for them.