Building the Barrel Vault January 2020

Celebration MEDITATIONS

GOD HAS PROVIDED. WE ARE CALLED TO MOVE FORWARD.

SEPTEMBER 27-OCTOBER 3, 2026

WEEKLY THEME

We move forward as we commit to building a Jesus-centered community where we can support one another in living like Jesus.

All meditation passages are from NRSVUE except as noted.

Matthew

The Word. Matthew 5:14
You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid.

Meditation.
Jesus was a man who did not mince his words. This verse from the Sermon on the Mount, gives a clear commandment to those who follow God: Be the light in the midst of darkness. Be the person who shines with their love. Because even the darkest presence cannot hide the love you show through your works. Even the darkest presence cannot hide the glory of God. As I was meditating on this verse, many other metaphors entered my brain, one of them being "the axe forgets what the tree remembers". Now, those who are familiar with this phrase understand that it is a phrase used to remind people that even a passing negative comment or action that we think nothing of can leave a lasting impact on those around us. I think we can all pinpoint times in our lives where another person was an axe to our tree. But, isn't the same true about good works? How even the smallest compliment or help we give to others might not seem like much to us in the moment, but could mean the world to the receiver? As you reflect on this verse, consider what good you can do from your position in your city on the hill. At the end of the day, a city is made up of neighborhoods whose sum makes the network. Let us be stewards of God's grace by being good neighbors, making our collective city on the hill shine all the brighter ("Won't You Be My Neighbor?" by Fred Rodgers is playing somewhere in the background).

JOY Prayer.
Dear Jesus, show me how I can live more like you in caring for others. O Holy Spirit, open my eyes and my heart to be a blessing to someone who looks like they could use some Jesus in their lives. Heavenly Father, give me a peace that trusts in You and calms my fears and reluctance to say encouraging words to someone who needs encouraging words. Amen.

~ Erin Stefanic

Mark

The Word. Mark 2:14
As he was walking along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax-collection station, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him.

Meditation.
Levi (also known to us as the apostle Matthew) worked for the Roman Empire collecting taxes from his own people. As long as the correct amount of tax income was given to the Roman Empire, Jewish tax collectors could charge, collect, and keep additional monies for themselves. His own people likely distrusted him as a traitor for being a tax collector and despised him for overcharging them. Since his job required him to be in frequent contact with Gentiles (the Romans), he may have been viewed as unclean, therefore ostracized by his own people, and perhaps even denied entry into the Synagogue.
One day while Levi was sitting in his tax collection booth, Jesus walked by, stopped and said to him, "Follow me." Jesus extended God's mercy and grace to Levi and apparently without question or hesitation, Levi just got up, left his tax collector job behind and followed Jesus. Scripture tells us that Jesus then even dined at Levi's house with other tax collectors and sinners.
God's mercy and grace are extended to each of us. Is Jesus saying "Follow me" to you? Will you get up and follow him?

JOY Prayer.
Jesus, no matter what I'm doing, when you say "Follow me," help me to be like Levi, and get up and follow wherever you lead me. Amen.

~ Barb Druck

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Luke

The Word. Luke 6:31
Do to others as you would have them do to you.

Meditation.
Jesus gives us a simple command but living it out can challenge us. He asks us to consider how we want others to treat us, with patience, dignity, kindness, compassion, and grace and then offer the same gifts to them.
We do not know what another person is carrying. Someone may be grieving, struggling with their mental health, caring for a loved one, feeling alone, or wondering whether there is a place where they truly belong. A listening ear, a gentle response, or an invitation to join us may become a sign of God's love when it is needed most.
Carlisle UMC strives to be a church where all people are welcomed, valued, and reminded of their sacred worth. When we listen without judgment, serve without seeking recognition, and make room for people who may feel forgotten, we do more than practice kindness. We Live Like Jesus.
Who might God place in your path today who needs the same understanding, encouragement, or grace that you would hope to receive?

JOY Prayer.
Jesus, teach me to see others as You see them. Help me listen with patience, respond with compassion, and treat every person with dignity. Show me someone who needs encouragement today and give me the courage to reach out. Help our church family become a place of healing, hope, and belonging as we seek to Live Like Jesus. Amen.

~ Michelle Williams

John

The Word. John 4:24-26 (The Message)
The woman said: "I do know that the Messiah is coming. When He arrives, we'll get the whole story." "I am He," said Jesus – "You don't have to wait any longer or look any further."

Meditation.
This woman was surprised to find Jesus at the well – she had chosen to come at this time – in the heat of noon - when no one would be there. But Jesus WAS there. – The woman had had a hard journey - she had been through five husbands, one way or another, and all the folks of town had rejected her.
But in truth, contrary to all her fear, she was NOT alone! Jesus WAS there. - Jesus knew all about her, and did NOT reject her – Jesus WAS Jesus!!

JOY Prayer.
Father God, I thank you for surprising me, time after time when, like this woman, I was hiding from others! I thank you also for sending loving people to BE with me when I needed to be reminded of You and of Your love for me and for all of us! – And today I pray that if You call me to go and BE with someone, I will follow as You lead! - - - AMEN!

~ Don Schoeps

Acts of the Apostles

The Word. Acts 2:46-47
Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

Meditation.
CUMC opened its door at 333 Spring Garden Street in the middle of the COVID19 pandemic, and with a new pastor that few people had actually met. Eating together and enjoying each other's favor was hardly on top of our minds. In the 'brave new world' that was September 2020, we were all nervously excited, and we came back slowly.
Six years have flown by, and it's clear that the CUMC family has become a living embodiment of Acts 2: 46-47. We are family! We may not all eat together every day (although many do), but we do praise God and enjoy each other's favor! Need proof? Just wander through the Gathering any Sunday morning between our services. People are everywhere, and children are running around with smiles on their faces. We are happy to be here, but more importantly, we are happy to be together!
I believe that we, the CUMC family, have captured the same happiness and joy that the early Christians experienced in Jerusalem after Pentecost. We spend time together and share our lives together. We share each other's burdens, and we open our door to everyone. This has not happened by accident. Together, we have allowed the Holy Spirit to work in us, both as individuals and as the body of Christ. My prayer as the next chapter of our life enfolds is that we always allow these 2 small verses to mold us and shape us. Thanks be to God.

JOY Prayer.
Gracious God, we praise your continuous work in our lives. May we always be a church that seeks to live in the afterglow of that first Pentecost. Amen.

~ Sharon Edwards

Paul

The Word. Acts 16:29-34 (abbreviated)
The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He 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." The jailer washed their wounds; [and] he and all his household were baptized. The jailer set a meal before them; [and] was filled with joy because he and his whole household came to believe in God.

Meditation.
To fully appreciate this passage, one must understand its context. Paul and Silas had been preaching in Phillipi and their preaching led to the casting out of a spirit that possessed a slave girl who was clairvoyant. This ruined the business of her owners, so they beat Paul and Silas, dragged them into the marketplace, and had them arrested, stripped and beaten again and jailed. The jailer was told they must not escape. He threw them in the most secure part of the jail and put them in leg irons. Paul and Silas did not fret. Instead, they began praying and singing to God. Suddenly, an earthquake shook the prison, opening wide every door. Assuming that Paul, Silas and the other prisoners had fled, the jailer knew his life was forfeited and prepared to kill himself. Miraculously, Paul called out letting him know that all the prisoners remained.
There are several important themes here: 1) Despite their situation, Paul and Silas stayed faithful, praying and praising God and sharing the Gospel even in chains. 2) In his own eyes, the jailer's life was over until he realized his spiritual life was still in the balance. 3) All he (we) have to do is to believe in Jesus, that's all. 4) Then after hearing their words, the Philippian jailer was overjoyed and showed this life change by caring for their wounds and other needs.

JOY Prayer.
Gracious God, help us to remember that grace arrives in unexpected places, through unexpected people, at unexpected times. Help us be like Paul and Silas bringing the word to those who otherwise may never know the good news of salvation through belief in your son, Jesus. Let those we encounter see in us and our actions the manifestation of your love for all, so that they too may experience unparalleled joy. Amen.

~ Roger Woods

Peter

The Word. Acts 10:34-35
Then Peter began to speak to them: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every people anyone who fears him and practices righteousness is acceptable to him."

Meditation.
God has shown Peter in a vision that all God has made is good. God does not show individuals favoritism based on wealth, status or nationality. Cornelius, a Gentile worshipper of God, sent for Peter to come to his home to tell him about Jesus. Understanding what God has prepared him for in his vision, Peter goes to the home of a Gentile (non-Jew). There he tells them the good news of Jesus, Lord of all.
Jesus helped all who came to Him, not discriminating because of gender, race or position. And so, He teaches us to be accepting of all our brothers and sisters. At CUMC we welcome all and All means All, **No Exceptions**.

JOY Prayer.
Jesus, help me to live like You, extending love and welcome to all I encounter. Open my eyes and heart to Your will in my life. Help me to rely on your Holy Scripture to guide me each day and to be a blessing to all I meet and to show love to all. Amen.

~ Lois Kielkopf