

# The Union Press

## PASTOR'S MESSAGE



### “Yet Even Now” – Thoughts on Grace and Repentance for the Season of Lent

I remember walking into my eleventh-grade chemistry class and immediately noticing something unusual on the front table. It caught everyone’s attention as we filed into the room. There was a plastic tub filled with what looked like water (though in chemistry class, you never really knew). Surrounding the tub were plexiglass shields. And standing beside it was my teacher, Mr. Brun, with a pair of safety glasses resting on his head.

The entire class was suddenly on high alert.

We took our seats. Mr. Brun began talking. I don’t remember a word he said — whatever it was couldn’t have been more interesting than what was sitting on that table. I remember him taking the tiniest metallic flake from a jar, holding it up with tweezers, and dropping it into the tub.

Then — BOOM. It exploded. That tiny metallic flake was potassium. And when potassium meets water, it explodes.

Normally, we keep combustible things far apart to minimize danger. We would never put a can of gasoline next to an open flame. And yet, in our spiritual lives, we sometimes believe something similar — that repentance and grace are incompatible. We imagine that if they come too close together, everything will go up in smoke.

But Scripture consistently places them side by side.

When Jesus began His ministry, His first sermon brought these two themes together:

“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

From beginning to end, repentance and grace walk together. And this has always been God’s way.

Through the prophet Joel, God shows us that life with Him is marked by both repentance and grace. The Christian life is shaped by repentance and sustained by grace.

**Joel invites us to consider two questions: What does God want? Why should we listen?**

### “Yet Even Now”

Our passage begins with these striking words: “Yet even now...” They are words of opportunity.

In Joel chapter 1, we read about a devastating locust plague:

*“What the cutting locust left, the swarming locust has eaten; what the swarming locust left, the hopping locust has eaten; and what the hopping locust left, the destroying locust has eaten.”*

The land was stripped bare. Crops were gone. Wine, oil, food — all destroyed.

(Continued Page 2)

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1-3 Pastor’s Message
- 4 Calendar
- 5 Just So You Know
- 6 Family Night

The Due Date for the  
April Newsletter is  
March 22nd.

(Pastor's Letter Continued From Page 1)

But Joel makes clear that the locusts are only a warning. They are a small preview of something greater — the coming Day of the LORD. Joel calls God's people to wake up, to take His judgment seriously, and to return to Him.

It seems the people had grown spiritually numb — detached from the seriousness of their condition, slow to return to the Lord.

And yet God says: "Yet even now..." Even in light of judgment. Even in light of failure. Even after devastation. There is still opportunity. There is still grace.

### **What Does God Want?**

Joel 2:12–13 says:

*"Yet even now," declares the LORD, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments."*

What does God want? He wants His people to return.

Repentance simply means turning — turning from our sin and turning toward God. Sometimes that means a complete 180-degree turn, like a driver going the wrong way down a one-way street. Other times it may be only a few degrees — the difference between a pilot landing a plane on the runway instead of the interstate.

From the Bible's perspective, repentance itself is a gift of grace — the work of the Holy Spirit within us. Left to ourselves, we run headlong into danger. It is the Spirit of God who flashes the warning lights, urging us to turn around.

From the very beginning of Scripture, we see what went wrong. In the garden, doubt entered human hearts. Adam and Eve began to question whether God truly had their best interest in mind. They chose their way over God's way.

That is the essence of sin. Sin is lawlessness. It is the wrong things we think, say, and do — and the good things we fail to do. It is saying no to God and yes to ourselves, going our way instead of God's way.

And if we are honest, we all know what that feels like. Sometimes we drift slowly. Sometimes we spin around suddenly. But in one way or another, we all find ourselves off course. God says: Return to Me. With all your heart. He does not want half-hearted apologies or outward displays without inward change. "Rend your hearts," He says — tear them open before Me. Lay it all out. That is not easy.

One of the hardest things to say is, "I'm sorry" — and to truly mean it. Sometimes we struggle to repent because we do not think we have done anything wrong. Other times we fear the response. What if we are rejected? What if we are not really forgiven? What if we must spend the rest of our lives trying to work our way back into God's good graces?

This is where we often misunderstand repentance, grace and God's heart. Repentance and grace belong together.

### **Why Should We Listen?**

Joel answers:

*"Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster."*

Why should we listen? - Because of who God is. He is gracious. He is merciful. He is patient. He is faithful in love. Our repentance is not met with hostility but with covenant faithfulness. "Yet even now" means that despite failure, grace remains available.

(Continued Page 3)

This promise reaches its fullest expression in Jesus Christ. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Through His death, reconciliation with God becomes possible. At the cross, repentance and grace meet perfectly.

The cross shows us the seriousness of sin — and the depth of God's love. There, we can truly rend our hearts. There, we receive forgiveness. In chemistry, potassium and water explode on contact. In the gospel, repentance and grace meet — and instead of destruction, there is new life.

### **Lent: A Season of Returning**

As we enter the season of Lent, Joel's words are especially fitting.

Lent is a season of preparation and repentance as we anticipate Good Friday and Easter. Just as we prepare carefully for significant moments in our lives, Lent invites us to prepare our hearts. The forty days remind us of Israel's forty years in the wilderness and Jesus' forty days of fasting. It is a time to turn from ourselves and return to the Lord with all our hearts.

But Lent is not about earning grace. It is about rediscovering it.

We confess not because God is harsh or fault-finding, but because He is gracious. We examine our hearts not to wallow in guilt, but to experience renewal. Repentance and grace are not enemies. They are companions in the Christian life. Lent simply highlights what is meant to be true all year long: We confess daily. We receive mercy daily. We walk in grace daily. As one writer beautifully puts it:

*"Lent is a time for discipline, for confession, for honesty — not because God is mean or finger-pointing — but because He wants us to know the joy of being cleaned out, ready for all the good things He has in store."*

"Yet even now," the Lord says. Even now, there is grace.

## **SERVICE TO ORDAIN & INSTALL OFFICERS**

Josh Gregor, Arlene  
Hastings, Kenny Beiler,  
Janet Supplee, & Judy  
Greenleaf



# MARCH

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 8:30 Prayer Meeting 9:00 Sunday School 10:00 Worship 4:00 Prayer Service @Little Britain PC	2 6:30 Octorara Pines Growth Group	3 9:00 am Quilting 7:00 Trustee Mtg	4 10:00 Prayer Mtg 6:30 Union Growth Group	5 5:30 Quarryville Growth Group	6 1:30 Kirkwood Growth Groups  World Day of Prayer	7
8 8:30 Prayer Meeting 9:00 Sunday School 10:00 Worship Daylight-Saving Time Begins	9 1:00 Bible Study 6:30 Octorara Pines Growth Group	10 9:00 am Quilting 7:00 Safety Mtg	11 10:00 Prayer Mtg 6:30 Union Growth Group	12	13 1:30 Kirkwood Growth Groups	14
15 8:30 Prayer Meeting 9:00 Sunday School 10:00 Worship	16 6:30 Octorara Pines Growth Group	17 9:00 am Quilting St. Patrick's Day	18 10:00 Prayer Mtg 6:30 Union Growth Group 7:00 Session Mtg	19 5:30 Quarryville Growth Group	20 1:30 Kirkwood Growth Groups 6:00-8:00 pm Family Night Spring Begins	21
22 8:30 Prayer Meeting 9:00 Sunday School 10:00 Worship	23 6:30 Octorara Pines Growth Group	24 9:00 am Quilting	25 10:00 Prayer Mtg 6:30 Union Growth Group	26	27 1:30 Kirkwood Growth Groups	28
29 8:30 Prayer Meeting 9:00 Sunday School 10:00 Worship Palm Sunday	30 6:30 Octorara Pines Growth Group	31 9:00 am Quilting				

# FOOD BANK

Red beets (canned), peas (canned), mustard, ketchup, mayonnaise, tuna (canned), seafood chowder/soup (can), microwave popcorn, fruit cups, snack crackers (individually wrapped packs), baby wipes, feminine hygiene products

## Easter Meals

Please bring your donated items for our Easter bag give-away by Monday, Mar. 23. You can leave non-perishable items in the cart at Union by Sunday, March 22nd.

Whole Ham or Ham slices or gift card to Giant grocery, 2 -cans of green beans, 1 - 20 oz. can of pineapple (slices or rings), 1 -1lb. bag of long carrots, 1 -5 lb. bag of fresh potatoes, 1 -box yellow or white cake mix, 1 - container of vanilla frosting, 1 -dozen eggs, 1 -1 lb box of butter or margarine, 1 - bag of jelly beans, 1 -bag of shredded coconut

# MARCH GREETERS

1 – Joyce Letterman & Darlene Gray  
8 – (Still Available)  
15 – The Holmes Family  
23 – (Still Available)  
30 – (Still Available)

# LECTIONARY PASSAGES

## March 1<sup>st</sup>

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Lent

Genesis 12:1-4a; Psalm 121;  
Romans 4:1-5, 13-17; John 3:1-17

## March 22<sup>nd</sup>

### 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent

Ezekiel 37:1-14; Psalm 130;  
Romans 8:6-11; John 11:1-45

## March 8<sup>th</sup>

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Lent

Exodus 17:1-7; Psalm 95;  
Romans 5:1-11; John 4:5-42

## March 29<sup>th</sup>

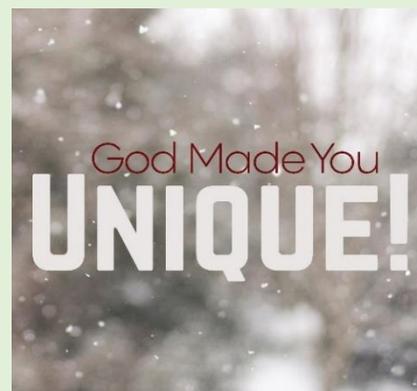
### Palm Sunday

Isaiah 7:10-14; Psalm 45;  
Hebrews 10:4-10; Luke 1:26-38

## March 15<sup>th</sup>

### 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent

1 Samuel 16:1-13; Psalm 23;  
Ephesians 5:8-14; John 9:1-41



# MARCH BIRTHDAYS

- 1 Donald Hastings
- 2 Gary Jackson
- 5 Darlene Gray
- 6 Cindy Sudnikovitch
- 8 Janet Stewart
- 10 Terry Greenleaf  
Edgar Church
- 11 Samuel Reyburn
- 12 Dwayne Scotten  
Linda Harrington
- 13 Julia Reyburn
- 14 James Tucker Reyburn
- 15 Joyce Letterman
- 16 Gerald Ferguson
- 19 Bill Sudnikovitch
- 24 Ann Rawle  
Isabella Greer
- 25 Jeff McCardell
- 27 William Ferguson
- 28 Gloria Almer
- 30 Joseph Greer III  
Cheryl Wallace

# FINANCIAL REPORT

Giving for January: \$5,852

January Expenses: \$11,050

Avg. Attendance: 50

Sunday School collection for the Glovers: \$35

Union Presbyterian Church  
5637 Street Road,  
Kirkwood, PA 17536



*Learn to Play*  
**PICKLEBALL**

*Join us for a fun night of PICKLEBALL & PUZZLES!  
Friends and family are welcome.*

**FRIDAY, MARCH 20  
6:00PM - 8:00PM**

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**UNION PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
5637 STREET ROAD, KIRKWOOD**

For more information please visit  
[www.unionpres.com](http://www.unionpres.com)