



**L E N T**  
**D E V O T I O N A L S**  
**P A R T O N E**

## March 6th, 2019

**Mark 9:28-29** After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, "Why couldn't we drive it out?"

**29** He replied, "This kind can come out only by prayer and fasting."

Sometimes I wonder if we are tapping into all God has for us. I'm not talking about salvation. That's our eternity. I'm talking about here on this earth. If a certain demon can only be removed by prayer and fasting, what are other things that require prayer and fasting? And are we spending enough time praying and fasting? Lent is an opportunity for us to put our flesh down and build up our spirit man. We do that by not giving our flesh the things it desires, and by feeding and working out our spirit. So how do we starve our flesh? The easiest way is through food, but it's not just what we put in our mouths that feeds our flesh. The things we watch, the things we read, and the things we listen to can also be food for our flesh. Make sure those things are wholesome and encouraging for your spirit. Ways to feed your spirit are prayer, worship, reading the word of God, and praise. Let's take the time this spring to connect our spirit with God's. Let's be very careful what we put in so that we will be able to produce here on this Earth.

Pray and ask God what he wants you to remove from you life. Something that might be a stumbling block to your relationship with Him. And also ask him what he wants you to increase so you can begin drawing closer to him.

Andy Tracy  
Senior Pastor

## March 7th, 2019

**John 10:10 The thief cometh not, but that he may steal, and kill, and destroy: I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep.**

Have you ever gone through a time where things were going relatively well for you and you found yourself struggling to remember your need for God and your relationship with Him, but then something changes and life became challenging, and immediately you find yourself thinking about God again? Most of the time, we will then find ourselves blaming God in some way for what is going on. Like, "why aren't you taking care of me God? Why are you allowing this to happen?", when just a short time ago you barely even remembered God existed. I wish I knew why we had this tendency, but I do know this, these feelings are a direct contradiction to the character of God. God's will is FOR you, not against you. He has come that we may have LIFE and not only that, but that we may have it more ABUNDANTLY! I don't know about you, but that gives me so much peace and comfort. We serve a good God, and anything that looks different than that is just not true.

Father God, I pray today that no matter where I am at, and how things in my life are looking that I would remember who you are and all that you have done for me. I thank you for the good, and I trust you in the bad. You are FOR me, and I will trust that no matter how things feel. Thank you for loving me more than I could possibly even imagine. Amen.

Ruth Tracy  
Worship Leader

## March 8th, 2019

One of my favorite things to do in the summer when I was a kid, and even a little to this day, is go swimming. When I was a kid I could spend hours swimming and diving for stuff in the pool. My parents would throw coins and other things in the pool, and I would dive down and find the objects. The most annoying part was when my goggles would fog up, because when I would get to the bottom I couldn't find what I was looking for.

Have you ever felt that way in your walk with God? You are trying to see what He has for you next and you just can't seem to find it. No matter what you do, everything just seems to be in a fog. I want to give you two things that hopefully will help you find Him.

First thing is to keep seeking Him. Sometimes finding Him is just out of reach. Stay down in the water a little longer. Reach out a little farther. Scripture tells us in **Jeremiah 29:13** **"If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me."** So dive back down and keep searching. God wants you to find Him. But it's going to take a wholehearted effort.

The second thing is to get the filth off your goggles. Maybe the thing holding you back is something you've been holding on to for far too long and God is asking you to let it go and to trust Him. **Matthew 16:25** says, **"If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it."** What are you holding on to that needs to be let go?

Today push yourself to go a little deeper in your search for Him, and ask God if there is anything you've been holding on to that needs to be let go of...

Shawn Vandemark  
Assistant Pastor

## March 9th, 2019

**John 10:4-5 (NRSV)**

**"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"**

I have the privilege of leading a small group for 3rd-4th grade boys here at FCC every Wednesday evening. We play games, share about our week, go to worship, discuss what it means to be a Christian, and pray for one another. One of the most frequent questions in that group is, "How do I know what God wants me to do?" In church we are always talking about this God who has a plan for our lives, who wants to be in relationship with us, who sent his Son Jesus to die for us because he loved us so much. But even when we believe all that, it can be tough to figure out what it actually looks like!

My answer to them is that it just takes time. Time spent with the LORD. I know what Pastor Andy expects from me as an assistant pastor of this church because I meet with him one-on-one every single week. I know what my family needs from me because I set aside time to be with them every week. I know what is needed because I have learned their voices, spent time really understanding what they mean when they say something, and noticed patterns over time that really help me know what is important to them. Deep relationship is built with consistency over time.

But wait, the scripture doesn't stop with us knowing the voice of our LORD, it also says, "They do not know the voice of strangers." I think that this is the real challenge for many of us. We spend some time with the LORD, seeking after him, but we also allow the messages and perspectives of the world come into our thoughts and hearts, and we end up conflicted and confused. Part of learning to hear the voice of the LORD is stripping away those other voices that are not rooted in him.

May you know the voice of the LORD  
May you run, not walk, but run away from those voices that are not of him  
May you enter into the peace that is waiting for those who follow the one who laid down his life for us.

Eli Tracy  
Assistant Pastor

**March 10th, 2019**

*Sunday's Sermon Notes -*

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*What has God been speaking to me -*

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*Things to pray for this week -*

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## March 11th, 2019

I give up... I give it all up to God.

Sometimes to get your life back, you have to face the death of what you thought your life would look like. ~Lysa TerKeurst

How many of us are planners? From the time we get up in the morning until the time we go to bed at night, every minute has been planned out in our minds. And... then... things don't go as planned, ugh, how frustrating this can be! You try to go with the flow of these changes but really these things cause you to implode on the inside. And then, from that little change in your scheduled day you move on to think that your relationships should be better; you're an adult now so your finances should be better than they are, and then your people let you down. You find yourself exhausted and exasperated. What is a person supposed to do with all this stuff not going as planned?

We go back to the beginning. Back to where we left God, and where we took over the control. God is still there, He is waiting for us to allow Him to have His control back.

Give it all up to Him. Give Him your problems, your finances, your disappointments, and while you are giving it up to Him, give Him your praise and thanks that He is in control and not you. This is something that you will probably have to do several times a day, just keep giving up and giving it all up to God. Allow God to be God and know that we will be okay. Trust His timing in your life.

**Psalms 118:1 Give thanks unto God; for He is good; For His lovingkindness endures forever.**

Dear God,

We all struggle with control and we try to hold on tightly to our plans. We know that we are here for your plans, please forgive us for trying to control everything and help us to release our lives to you. Your plans are so much greater than our plans. We thank you and we do trust you, even when we don't understand, we know your timing is perfect. In Jesus' name, amen.

Buff Tracy  
Assistant Pastor

## March 12th, 2019

**I Chronicles 16:23 Sing to the LORD, all the earth; proclaim his salvation day after day. 24 Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples. 25 For great is the LORD and most worthy of praise;**

I was recently listening to a well known minister explain to his church the difference between praise and worship. He said, praise is thanking God for things that He has done whether for you or someone you care for. This is where most Christians live. They are very thankful for God helping them through a tough time, or for His guiding presence through a decision, or maybe they even have a miraculous testimony of God doing something that could not have been predicted. These are all wonderful reasons to give thanks and to praise God, and we should do this often. Yet, there is a deeper level. Worship. Worship speaks from a heart that just thanks God for being God. Whether times are good or bad, a heart of worship can still sing to God. Whether you got the miracle or you are still struggling through, you still lift your voice to the God who was and is and is to come because you know He is faithful. What a tremendous place to live. To have your honor not be predicated on circumstance but to worship God simply for who you know He is to you. There is a power here that you can tap into to transform your view of life. I wanted to encourage you to take that step. Find a song that simply honors God for being God. One of my favorites is Revelation Song by Kari Jobe.

Worthy is the Lamb who was slain

Holy Holy is He

Sing a new song to Him who sits on  
Heaven's mercy seat

Holy Holy Holy

Is the Lord God Almighty

Who was and is and is to come

With all creation I sing

Praise to the King of kings

You are my everything

And I will adore You.

Morvin Dixon

Assistant Pastor

## March 13th, 2019

I have not been defeated

If you've spent a decent amount of time in church (or been around people in any fashion really), you'll at some point experience hurt. Whether intentionally or unintentionally someone is going to say something or do something that just hurts. There is also the heaviness we can feel when we walk with others through their hurts – a loss in the family, a wayward son... We can hurt right along with them.

I recently experienced hurt. But it was minimal, so please hear me when I say I'm not trying to downplay pain, or hurt, or suffering in anyway, but I was still left not knowing what to do next. What do I do with this hurt? I've observed people who have gone through some really tough stuff, but through it all remain faithful to the Lord. Seeing their character, and stability, and strength is commendable. How they react seems to reveal what's really present in their hearts.

I just so happened to be reading Lamentations 3 at the time. And the word that came to me the following morning, and really brought me comfort, was hope. I envisioned a scale – the goodness and mercy of our God FAR outweighed the hurtful act I had experienced.

That was a lightbulb moment for me; I believe hope is the answer. That's how amazing Christian people bounce back when life is hard. Hope in who God is FAR outweighs any hurt or pain. When you get knocked down (figuratively speaking), hope is what picks you back up on your feet. I can say it is well with my soul because my soul is still intact. The fight has not ended, I have not been defeated!

**“When life is heavy and hard to take, go off by yourself. Enter the silence. Bow in prayer. Don't ask questions: Wait for hope to appear. Don't run from trouble. Take it full-face. The “worst” is never the worst.”**

**Lamentations 3:28-30 MSG**

My prayer for us as a church family is that we would love as we were called to. May we respond in love to the Lord and to each other even when life is hard. May we find strength and be filled with joy as we “wait for hope to appear”!

Sharon Lillemon  
Secretary/Treasurer

**March 14th, 2019**

**Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.**

**Ephesians 4:9**

Your words have power. They can bless or curse. They can build up or tear down. The Apostle Paul encourages us to do the former. In fact, we are to guard our tongue from any unwholesome talk. Another way to translate that is to refrain from any hurtful words. Instead, our words are to build others up according to their needs.

To do this, we have to pay attention to the needs of others. How do we do that? Be sensitive, notice when someone seems down or discouraged and speak words of encouragement and edification. We are the body of Christ. He speaks through us. He willingly gave His life for us. A love, that great, needs to be shared with others. Be His mouthpiece today and build up those around you today.

Lord Jesus, thank you for your wonderful love and your great sacrifice. Fill me this day so that you can live through me, and my words will bless every life I touch today.

Pastor Dave Nofziger  
Church Counselor

## March 15th, 2019

**Romans 10:17 "So faith comes from hearing and hearing through the word of Christ."**

As followers of Jesus Christ we all have that in common, the first time we "heard" the Word. The time when our faith was activated. When we heard the good news about Jesus as the crucified and risen Savior. The time when we invited Jesus into our hearts and lives.

For me, the first time I heard the good news of John 3:16 was on Easter Sunday, April 11th, 1971. The plan of salvation, and that I was a sinner. **Romans 3:23 "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."**

My faith was activated that day and I went forward to the altar in that little country church and received Jesus into my heart, and my Mom also accepted Jesus that day!!! And my dad re-committed his life to the Lord. It was a glorious day!!!

So, at this time of Lent, Lord we pray for those who have not heard the good news, send laborers to them to share the word, and for those who have heard but have not yet accepted your free gift of salvation...

You are a good, good Father!! Thank you for loving us...

Timberly Tracy  
Head Custodian

## March 16th, 2019

**I John 1:7 "But if we walk in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin." vs. 9 "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."**

Father God, the agony of being up here is unimaginable, and My body is already half destroyed from the beatings those soldiers gave me, and the thorns on my head are making it throb even more. But this is all part of our wonderful plan for humanity and I am willingly doing this for them. I see through my half shut swollen eyes, the Pharisees standing far off. They won't come near me because they don't want to become unclean, still missing the point that it is My precious blood that can cleanse them, not their endless laws. They think it's over and like the devil himself they couldn't be more wrong. Resurrection Day is coming! My precious children, if you only knew how much I care and that this blood shed is for YOU.

I see My mother and her heart breaks like none of the others. John, please take care of her won't you? He's your son now, Mary. My own brothers aren't here - they don't understand it all yet. My precious brethren, I'm doing this for YOU.

All of YOU, this is just the beginning. Death, sin, and evil will be conquered by My blood! Because that is what the Cross does - it redeems, sets free, heals. The Blood will wash away all sins for mankind forever, and all they need to do is to receive it.

What my precious children, will you do with this blood? Will you ask for it to save you, or just go on ignoring it?

Prayer: My Lord Jesus, I never want to take for granted your great sacrifice and all that it has done for me. I want you to be Lord of my life and forgive all of my sins, and cleanse me with your precious blood so I may serve you the rest of my days.

Sue Nofziger  
Volunteers as our Missions Coordinator

**March 17th, 2019**

*Sunday's Sermon Notes -*

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*What has God been speaking to me -*

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*Things to pray for this week -*

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## March 18th, 2019

Shavout is a major Jewish festival that falls 50 days after the second day of Passover. Originally a harvest festival, it now commemorates the giving of the Ten Commandments on Mt Sinai.

This also happens to be the day that the disciples were in the upper room and the Holy Spirit first fell upon them and filled them. The day of Pentecost (derived from the Greek Pentekoste or 50th day)

While God chose to first send the Holy Spirit to the early church during this festival that doesn't mean we can only receive the Holy spirit at that time of year. But rather the Holy Spirit is available to each Christian, all we have to do is seek his presence.

The Holy spirit didn't just come without the early church seeking him. In **Acts 1:4**, after Jesus had told them that he was sending the Holy spirit they didn't just sit around and wait but the Bible says **"They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers."**

They weren't just waiting, they were praying and seeking this gift Jesus had promised.

If we want to see a move of the Holy Spirit in ourselves and in our church, we first have to become unified in our prayer that we want the Holy Spirit to move among us.

Let's spend time today and everyday as a church body earnestly asking for a powerful move of the Holy Spirit in our church.

Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Mike Lewis  
Elder

## March 19th, 2019

**Romans 15:1-2 We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. 2 Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up.**

Survival of the fittest. Leaving the weak behind because they are just slowing us down, is not a biblical way to live our lives. Aren't you thankful that when we are weak He is strong, and that the Lord didn't leave us in our filth but made a way of escape?

I love the word obligation in that scripture. It's not just a good idea to help those weaker than us, it is our responsibility. **James 4:17 says, So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.** It is sinful for us to not help those weaker than us. We MUST do it. We also are supposed to do it not to please ourselves but with their growth in mind.

My dad used to say; "the strong build bridges to the weaker and the mature to the immature. Whoever sees themselves as the more mature must reach out first." As we grow and mature in the faith, remember to look around and help others on their journey as well. If you do that, I think you might actually see more increase than if you don't reach out.

Pray that God brings someone across your path that needs your help and that you would have the courage to help them.

Andy Tracy  
Senior Pastor

## March 20th, 2019

I'm sure we have all been in a situation where we are overwhelmed with circumstances and uncertain how things could change. That is exactly where the disciples found themselves. They were out on the sea and the storms and wind had become too much. But out came Jesus walking on the water. So to add to the storm and wind, they also had the fear that there was a ghost on the water. But that was no ghost, it was Jesus. Let's look at Mark 6:50 and see what Jesus says to the disciples as he approaches the boat.

**They were all terrified when they saw him. But Jesus spoke to them at once. "Don't be afraid," he said. "Take courage! I am here!" (Mark 6:50 NLT)**

Think of the moments you have been overwhelmed or uncertain and imagine Jesus telling you "Don't be afraid. Take courage! I am Here!" Oh how peace would fill me and I would see hope. This is who our God is. He is peace in the overwhelming storms and He is our hope in uncertain circumstances. God is with you right now and wants to tell you "Don't be afraid, Take courage, I am here..."

Take a moment and thank God that He is our peace and hope! Maybe this message is what you needed to hear or maybe it's for someone else. I want to encourage you to share this message with someone this week. Someone in your life might need that reminder this week.

Pray for God to give you opportunities to share this message with someone, and when the opportunities arise to have the courage to share it.

Shawn Vandemark  
Assistant Pastor

## March 21st, 2019

### Proverbs 3:21

**“My child, do not let these escape from your sight:  
Keep sound wisdom and prudence,  
And they will be life to your soul  
And adornment for your neck.”**

The LORD has really been challenging me lately to journal, along with my time spent reading the Bible. Like so many other people, I have always wanted to journal, but every time I start, I only make it a few days before losing steam and setting it down for a few weeks before picking it up again. But I do pick it up again, because there is just something about taking the time to write about what I have read in the Bible that really helps it settle in my soul.

I was flipping through my journal, and I came across some writing on Proverbs 3. Every line of this book in the Old Testament is packed with wisdom for our lives. Proverbs 3:21-35 captivated me one day, as it laid out the source of true security, and also cautioned against false ways that people can get caught up in. Some of these false ways include:

- Sudden Panic
- Withholding Good
- Planning Harm Against a Neighbor
- Quarrelling without Cause
- Envy of the Violent

You see, the scripture reveals that people will become consumed by these ways of being, and then they will try to pull you in along with them. They have become convinced that there is purpose and urgency in these ways of being. You can probably think of people you know that fit into one of these categories. (Maybe you have been stuck in one of these at one time in your life. I sure have.) But the truth is that they are empty, and lead to death. The truth is that the LORD is the only true source of security and purpose in this life. We just need to keep our focus on him, and he will guide our path.

May you know the wisdom of the LORD.

May you resist the fear, panic, and envy of the world.

May you find security and purpose in the LORD, the only true source there is.

Eli Tracy  
Assistant Pastor

## March 22nd, 2019

Do you hear God? He is speaking to you.

We need to want the first voice we hear in the morning to be God's. Begin your day with praying and reading the Bible, not with Facebook, Instagram or the news. It only takes a few minutes.

I've had many people say that they pray but they never hear God's voice. Well sorry, but that's on you not on Him. Are you daily/hourly spending time praying and listening? Our friendship with Him is like a friendship with your best friend, your child, your sibling, a parent or grandparent, it requires time spent with them. When you are with your people you begin to know how they are going to react to something, what they would say in a certain situation. They call you on the phone and you recognize their voice because they have spent time with you, they yell from another room and you know who is yelling for you. God is no different. You will hear His voice when you spend time with Him, His word/voice will come alive. Often during some of our most painful times in life we hear His voice the clearest. Remember, He will guide you through those painful times, He won't leave you. Listen daily, you will hear Him.

**Psalms 5:3 O Jehovah, in the morning shalt thou hear my voice; In the morning will I order my prayer unto thee, and will keep watch**

Dear God,

Thank you for the desire to pray, read my Bible and learn to hear your voice. Thank you for reminding me that you are there when I forget and begin my day without you. Thank you for always guiding my way and speaking comfort and encouragement to me. You are my guide and I will follow you. In Jesus' name, amen.

Buff Tracy  
Assistant Pastor

## March 23rd, 2019

"The best way to break a bad habit is to drop it." --Leo Aikman

It seems as though we like to try and make things as hard as possible. It's like it gives us more of a feeling of accomplishment if we make the task harder than it needs to be. Let's take bad habits for instance. We make them seem very hard to break, when really the answers are usually very simple. If you have a habit of gossiping. Shut your mouth. Do you waste too much time on social media? Don't open those apps. Do you tend to look at wrong things on the internet? Don't push that button. Now keep in mind we're talking about bad habits, not addictions. Habits are behaviors that you have FULL control over. With addictions there can be a slightly different issue. Unlike a habit such as brushing your teeth, you have almost no control over an impulsive desire to repeatedly engage in an addiction. If you do have a negative addiction, the answer is still rather simple, GET HELP.

**Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the [Holy] Spirit [the work which His presence within accomplishes] is love, joy (gladness), peace, patience (an even temper, forbearance), kindness, goodness (benevolence), faithfulness, 23 gentleness (meekness, humility), self-control (self-restraint, continence).**

This scripture describes who God created you to be. Not full of a bunch of bad habits or always seeking instant gratification, but a loving, gentle, patient person. Here is a good habit to start. Read your Bible daily. Develop a habit of pondering one scripture or passage throughout an entire day. Start meeting regularly with a Christian friend to talk about what you are reading in the Bible. You will see a difference in your life. You will find the power to overcome every negative influence in your life. So take charge of your life. If you have bad habits, let's drop them today and stop letting them hold us back from being all God has called us to be.

PRAYER: Father, I ask that you show me one bad habit that I can break during lent. I want to develop into the person that you want me to be and I am asking for your help in identifying areas of adjustment. Thank you for working in my heart and life. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

Morvin Dixon  
Assistant Pastor

**March 24th, 2019**

*Sunday's Sermon Notes -*

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*What has God been speaking to me -*

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*Things to pray for this week -*

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## March 25th, 2019

**Deuteronomy 6:7, 9 NIV 7 Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. 9 Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.**

Can I be brutally honest with you? Parenting is hard. It's a BLESSING I would never run from. But there are days where desperate prayers feel necessary just to do an okay job. This morning was just one of those mornings, but once I got them in the van (our 6, 4 and 2-year-old) and we started our daily route peace came. We start our drive reciting 5-6 scriptures... I then ask them what they are thankful for. I love the answers their young minds come up with! Then I say a prayer over them.

This daily prayer is what I wanted to talk to you about today. I believe the majority of you have some form of family, whether it's your spouse, kids, grandkids, parents, siblings... I'm guessing we can all identify who we would classify as our 'family'. Now, what do you want your 'family' to be known for? I'm sure we can all agree we want to be known as Christians, but let's be more specific. Are you generous, are you encouragers, do you have high levels of integrity, are you faithful, are you leaders, are you hard workers...?

Now it's time for your homework. What are you going to faithfully, through prayer, speak into existence over your family? I have several, but one specifically is that we would glorify Him with our resources. By that I mean I want our money spent in a way that gives Him glory. And secondly, what are you going to write/hang on your wall as a declaration of who your family is? One I love and have hung in our dining room is Joshua 24:15 NKJV, "...as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

I have to add that my mom had this verse hung in our home growing up. Reading that wall-hanging as I passed by, year after year, will forever be ingrained in my memory. Which proves to me our efforts are not in vain!

Sharon Lillemon  
Secretary/Treasurer

## March 26th, 2019

Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.

Proverbs 18:21

As Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday the crowds were shouting, celebrating him as their promised King. On Monday and Tuesday he taught in the temple. The religious leaders became very frustrated, they wanted to kill him but were unable to "because all the people hung on his words." Luke 19:48

Five days later Jesus hung on the cross because of their words. By that time the people didn't want him anymore.

"The whole crowd shouted, away with this man! They kept shouting, crucify him! Crucify him!"

With loud shouts they insistently demanded that he be crucified, and their shouts prevailed" Luke 23:18-23.

My words can also bear responsibility for Jesus' death. Have my conversations always been "full of grace"? Colossians 4:6

Am I consistently "speaking the truth in love"? Ephesians 4:15

Is what I say "helpful for building others up according to their needs"? Ephesians 4:29

Does my "gentle answer" turn away wrath or does my "harsh word" stir up anger? Proverbs 15:1

Our silent and gracious Savior took our sins on himself, and we are healed by his saving work, in which he declared once for all, "It is finished." May we be finished with words that hurt, and give our tongues to words that heal.

Timberly Tracy  
Head Custodian

## **March 27th, 2019**

**Romans 13:1-2 Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.**

Authority is almost a cuss word in our culture today. It's not just the word that bothers us, but actual authority. Everywhere you look today we are taught to buck authority. That it is a bad thing and it is dragging us down or holding us back. But I don't think you can have a true understanding of faith without it. In Matthew 8 Jesus has an encounter with a centurion (an army commander) who wishes for his servant to be healed. Jesus says he will come and heal the servant, but the centurion says he is not worthy to have Jesus in his home and as a man under authority who understands authority asks Jesus to simply speak the words and his servant will be healed. Jesus responds by saying: "Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith." It is important to understand the comparison. The centurion was not of the Jewish faith. He did not have a Jewish upbringing. He was not taught the Jewish law, and yet had a faith greater than those who were because he understood authority. If we want our faith to grow we need to be people under authority. People who are subject, knowing that God is the ultimate authority and He is the one who instituted authority.

Pray today for all those in authority.

Andy Tracy  
Senior Pastor

**March 28th, 2019**

**"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep."**

**John 10:11**

Easter is one of my favorite times of the year. The weather is starting to warm up! The trees and grass are starting to become green again. But the best part is we celebrate our Savior. In this scripture we see Jesus call himself the Good Shepherd. Now I have never been a shepherd, but one thing I do know that makes a good shepherd a good shepherd, and not an ok one, is "caring". A good shepherd cares when one of his sheep goes missing, and even to the place where he will leave everyone else to save the one. Also, if the good shepherd notices when one of his sheep are hurt he will carry it on his back until it's better.

We have a good shepherd in Jesus. So good and caring that He was willing to sacrifice His life for us so that we can have life through Him. So maybe today you are hurting and need to be carried for a while, ask Jesus to carry you and to be with you. Or maybe you are the lost sheep, today ask Jesus to come find you. This Easter season let's celebrate the fact that our Jesus is a Good Shepherd and was willing to lay down His Life for His sheep.

Take a moment and thank God that He sent His Son Jesus and that He is our Good Shepherd.

Shawn Vandemark  
Assistant Pastor

## March 29th, 2019

Psalm 131 (NRSV)

**"O LORD, my heart is not lifted up, my eyes are not raised too high;  
I do not occupy myself with things too great and marvelous for me.  
But I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its  
mother;**

**My soul is like the weaned child that is with me.**

**O Israel, hope in the LORD**

**From this time on and forevermore."**

I meet up with a spiritual mentor and friend every Wednesday morning for coffee at Southside Cabin Fever. We generally have a book we are reading together, and in a recent discussion we were looking at the Spiritual Disciplines of Solitude and Silence, from the book, "The Making of an Ordinary Saint" by Nathan Foster. Now, most of the time these two practices don't make the short list when talking about how to draw closer to God, but in this world of noise and distraction, I have found them to be vitally important!

I know, without a doubt, that one of the enemy's most powerful tools of destruction in my life is distraction. There is always another show I haven't seen, game I haven't played, podcast I haven't listened too, or movie I haven't watched. But even sneakier than entertainment, I can become distracted by filling my life with things that are generally thought to be good! And so I find myself having every evening, every weekend, every waking moment claimed, with no time to rest. More importantly, I leave no time to pause, and to listen. To listen for that still small voice of the Lord.

The practices of Solitude and Silence, or getting alone with the Lord and listening, help me to set aside time and space to simply sit at the feet of the Lord and connect with him. Because setting aside that time is not about seeming impressive to God, or about checking off some item on a spiritual to do list so that people see me as a committed Christian. It is simply an opportunity to BE with the one who saved me, loves me endlessly, and desires a relationship with me.

May you be like a weaned child with its mother, at peace and fulfilled.  
May you set aside distraction and seek out silence,  
and in the silence may you find rest at the feet of our LORD.  
Amen

Eli Tracy  
Assistant Pastor

## March 30th, 2019

"Live so that your friends can defend you but never have to." --Arnold H. Glasow

When asked most people will say if necessary they would lie to get a friend out of trouble. While it's great to have your ride-or-die friends, a circle of people that have your back no matter what, we should do our part to make their job as easy as possible. We need to inventory our lives, our speech, the way we love, our purity, and find where we can raise our standards. In raising our personal standards, we become better people and by becoming better people, we become people who hopefully need no defense.

It is interesting what the Apostle Paul says to Timothy, a man in his thirties, when it came to how he should lead the church that he was pastoring.

**I Timothy 4:12 Do not let anyone despise you because you are a young man. Show those who believe how they should live. Show them by the way you talk. Show them by the way you live. Show them by the way you love. Show them how to believe by the way you believe. Show them how to live a clean life by the way you live a clean life.**

Lent is a great time to look at your life and work on removing detractors from it. During your moments of fasting this month, ask God to show you one area that you can bring up to a higher standard. Your friends may thank you.

PRAYER: Lord, inspect my heart and show me an area that I need to bring to a new standard. Lead me to friendships and resources that will assist me in being strong in my new commitment. Amen.

Morvin Dixon  
Assistant Pastor

**March 31st, 2019**

*Sunday's Sermon Notes -*

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*What has God been speaking to me -*

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*Things to pray for this week -*

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