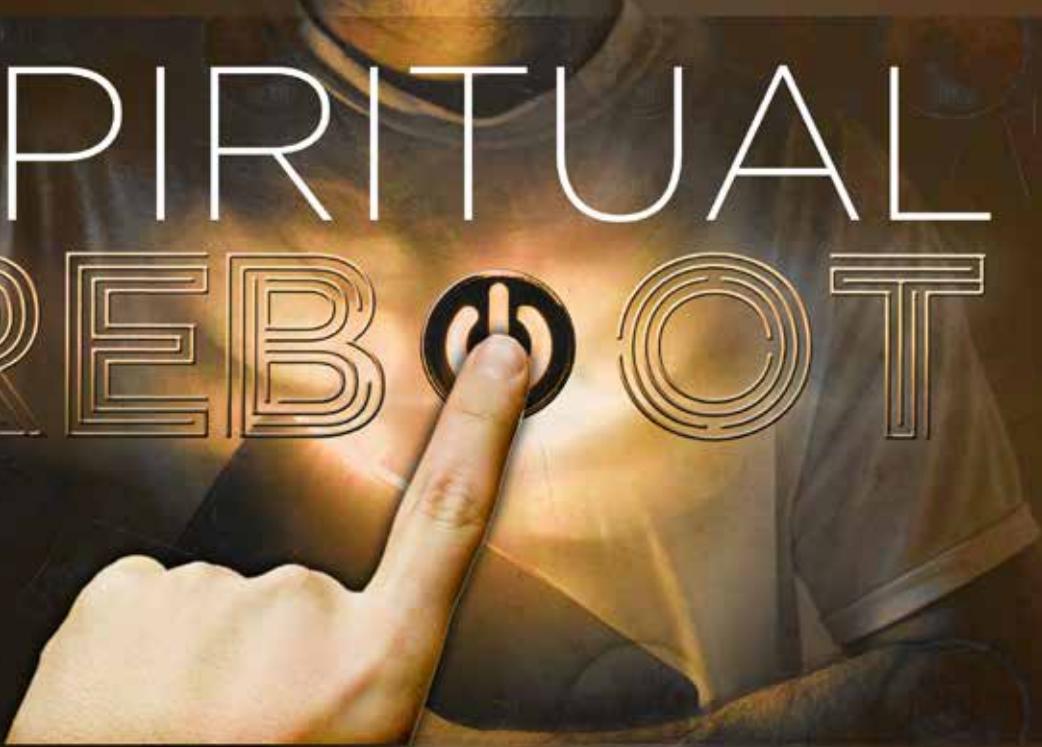


2021 LENTEN DEVOTIONAL

SPIRITUAL REBOOT

A hand is shown pressing a power button on a device. The button is a black circle with a white power symbol (a circle with a vertical line and a horizontal line). The hand is light-skinned and is wearing a black sleeve. The background is a dark, textured surface with a warm, golden light emanating from behind the hand and button, creating a glow. The overall image has a dark, textured background with a warm, golden light emanating from behind the hand and button, creating a glow.

...Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you,
I am the gate for the sheep.

-John 10:7

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2021 LENTEN RETREAT



H O L Y

TROUBLEMAKERS

& THE ARC OF JUSTICE

S U N D A Y

MAR. 14

2 - 5 PM

VIA ZOOM

For more details and to sign up visit www.hydeparkchurch.org/holytroublemakers/



LENT2021

Leaning Into Justice

CHALLENGE

THIS LENT JOIN US FOR THIS DAILY LENTEN CHALLENGE TO EXPAND YOUR KNOWLEDGE, GET A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE JUSTICE ISSUES WE FACE TODAY AND HOW YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

VISIT WWW.HYDEPARKCHURCH.ORG/LENTJUSTICE TO SIGN UP TODAY!

Dear Ones,

Until I started reading the bible, I assumed the people in the bible the disciples, the kings, or the prophets lived perfect lives. After all, some are called saints, others are known as patriarchs of the faith. Once I started reading the Word, I learned something very different. Humans are human, and we make mistakes no matter when we live.

The scripture for this Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent, is Psalm 51:1-17. We meet King David in deep despair. He is praying with a contrite heart, seeking God's forgiveness. Why? What could he have done that this ancient Jewish song recorded?

To understand this psalm, we need to go back to 2 Samuel 11 and the first part of 2 Samuel 12. We discover that King David not only broke one of the Ten Commandments, but he broke four of them! I'll share more about that in the service on February 17.

Now you and I tend to believe we are good people. We aren't about breaking the ten commandments so we must be pretty good, right? And yes, for the most part we are. However, we are still human, and fall short of God's desires for our lives. Lent is a time we can take stock of just where we are and how we are doing as believers in Christ.

First, a little history. Why do we celebrate Lent? The United Methodist Book of Worship tells us the season of Lent is a time for us to "confront our own mortality and confess our sin before God in the community of faith." Lent focuses on the dual themes of sin and death in light of God's redeeming love for us through Jesus Christ. For ten centuries Christians have honored Ash Wednesday as the first day of Lent. It is a time when we are called to prayer and fasting for 40 days so we can consider Jesus's atoning sacrifice for our sins upon the cross. Lent starts 40 days before Easter, minus Sundays, ending with the resurrection of Christ on Easter morning.

In the earliest centuries, Christians would repent of their sins and ashes sprinkled on their bodies as a sign of repentance and reconciliation. Around the 10th century, all believers showed their need for repentance by having ashes placed on their foreheads in the shape of a cross. The Catholic Church kept the tradition alive.

Protestants were wary the practice might become a sign of works that misrepresent steps to salvation.

We are not commanded to observe Ash Wednesday. But we do it as a time to become contrite in our own hearts and spirits about how we can better walk with our God. It is a time for us to look inward, yes, into our sin, into those places where we too have missed the mark. This isn't about giving up trivial items. It's about the change God wants, and we want, in our lives by spending time with Him. Then, at the end of 40 days, we can name a specific thought, habit, or attitude that we have changed through the reading of his Word and the power of the Holy Spirit.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION?

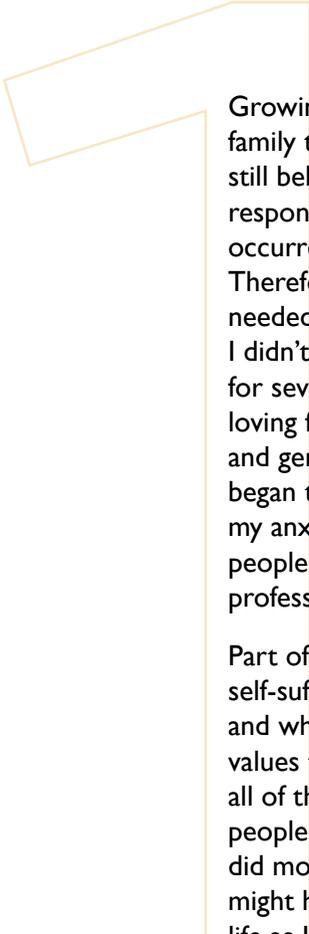
Dear Ones, how will you spend this Lenten Season?

What changes, true changes do you want to make?

How will your life be different, or better, this coming Easter morning?

SPIRITUAL REBOOT: CALLED TO ABUNDANT LIFE

JOHN 10:7-11 NRSV



Growing up, I was raised with a strong sense of personal responsibility. In my family this meant that you are accountable for your actions and your attitude. I still believe this. However, for me, at some point I began to think that personal responsibility meant I was self-sufficient and I was responsible for all things that occurred in my life, whether or not they were a result of my actions and attitude. Therefore, my life became something I felt I could control, something where I needed to call all of the shots, determine the actions, and dictate the outcomes. I didn't consider the role of Jesus as the shepherd of my life. This worked okay for several years. My life has been good. I am VERY blessed. I have a wonderful, loving family, a career that has been rewarding, access to good food and shelter, and generally good health. So why change anything now? A couple of years ago, I began to experience anxiety. I did not know (nor am I certain now) the origin of my anxiety. It did not go away just as it had come and I struggled, even though the people in my life were very supportive, encouraging, and patient. I decided I needed professional help so I began meeting with a counselor.

Part of what I have come to learn is that I have to surrender my belief that I am self-sufficient. When I believe myself to be self-sufficient, I am fixated on results and whether or not things I do are "successful" or "good" based on how the world values things. I think I began to experience anxiety because I could no longer juggle all of the balls in my life in a way that I thought I was supposed to. I think I thought people might find out I am not all I was projecting to be. I said all the right things, did mostly right things, but didn't accept Jesus, the truth, into my heart. If I did, I might have to make some REAL change and I had become comfortable in living life as I knew it. Maybe I wasn't comfortable in my life right then, but it was what I knew and the familiar was more appealing than the unknown. I intellectually know that all that I am and all that I have comes from God, but I did not practice that on a daily basis. I practiced that on a need to basis.

As I have been working through my anxiety and reflect on my life, I have found that I do not have to be perfect. I cannot control my entire life, and thinking and doing what I think is best at the time is okay, even if it does not work out how I hoped or planned. I am enough for God. Jesus loves me. If I will just listen to Jesus, he will provide me with guidance that is better than I could imagine. He wants to lead me,

to be in relationship with me, and to help me know his will for my life. He wants for me to have joy and life abundant.

When I surrender to Jesus, the Good Shepherd, and try to follow his guidance, he carries me through my times of anxiety and he gives me a sense of calm that I did not have. He lets me know that everything will be alright. He has my back. He lets me begin to live in eternity with him now. I want my life to model Jesus. I want to love others as Jesus loves me. I want to care for others as Jesus cares for me. I want to be a reflection of God's light in my life in such a way that when people see me or meet me, they will see God's love for them. I am still very much a work in progress. I hope every day to be better at listening and following Jesus. My prayer to God is "Lord, more of you, less of me." When that is my reality, my life is truly blessed and I am living the life God has planned for me.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

What thing(s) could you surrender to God to more fully live the life God has planned for you?

What step(s) might you take to make this happen?

How might your life change if you surrender these things to God?

FEBRUARY 28 | 2ND SUNDAY OF LENT

SUBMITTED BY TEDDY MEYERS

SPIRITUAL REBOOT: FACING THE DARK TO REACH THE LIGHT

1 JOHN 1:3-10 NRSV

Let's face it, 2020 was a year of darkness. It was a time of isolation, seclusion, and hardship. Personally, the isolation has been the hardest part for me. How many of you can attest to these facts? How many of you can attest to feeling disconnected from family, community, or God?

For those who don't know, I am 26-year-old male from North Carolina working as Project Engineer. I have been one of the lucky ones who has been able to maintain my job and work safely from home every day. I have been attending and involved with Hyde Park Community United Methodist Church for almost four years now. I have found a community of support and lifelong friendships while serving with our youth group counselors here at HPCUMC.

This past year, more than most, has been difficult while living away from family because I have also been restricted from interacting with and spending time with my community here in Cincinnati. I have struggled with communicating with my elderly father who has been dealing with Parkinson's for about two years now, and often come across as angry or agitated when he asks for help with technology. This past year I have dealt with my own mental health as result of the isolation and unfortunately not enough time in prayer and thought with God. I will admit to not always being the most faithful steward. I do not turn to prayer or the Bible in times of hardship like I should, but rather look to my friends and family for fellowship. Zoom and FaceTime have become a consistent part of the day to keep that connection and some semblance of fellowship.

By this point, I am sure you are wondering how this is supposed to connect to verses of the week (1 John 1:3-10). Well let's put it this way just because the outlook seems dark, "God is light."

It begins with a call to join in fellowship with Christ followers. It follows with the statement "God is light" which stands out to me as a stark contrast to how I have felt for much of the past year, shrouded in darkness. Don't get me wrong, there have been bright spots and bright people who have continued to remind that there is so much opportunity to share in still. Before I go any further, what does "God is light" mean to you? Personally, I see this as a statement of hope, as a statement of commitment, and as a statement of promise. For all the isolation

and hardships over the past year, I personally have found opportunities to develop deeper connections with those I care deeply about. I have found opportunities for personal growth by taking advantage of excess time to begin grad school. I have developed better maintenance for my own mental health. And yes, these are all personal, but looking back now I know I am not the one responsible for these opportunities of growth and success. God is the light in all my dark moments and this gives me hope. It invites me to let God's light shine through me.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

What spiritual darkness are you facing that keeps you from connecting with God?

Who or do you turn to or where do you go in searching for God's light?

How or where are you sharing God's light?

SPIRITUAL REBOOT: YOU ARE NOT YOUR SIN

JOHN 8:1-11 NRSV

This entire scripture may not be familiar to everyone, but the phrase “Don’t throw stones!” may be. We hear the phrase; “People who live in glass houses should not throw stones.” These statements are most likely inspired by this passage from John. Jesus says, “Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” This is Jesus’s “drop mic” moment. It stops every in their tracks. He calls their bluff, as he knows that none of us are without sin. Who are we to be judging others?

The passage shares some other thoughts. This group could have been a lynch mob. They could have gone ahead and followed the law of the land and stoned this woman for committing adultery. However, they were really trying to entrap Jesus. They were trying to catch him going against the law and he turns the tables on them. It must have been a stunning scene. The men were speechless. They dropped their rocks on the ground and left. They realized that Jesus had a message for all of them. None of them were without sin. None of them were perfect.

As I write this, we have just witnessed a modern-day lynch mob going to the Capitol building in Washington DC to kill politicians that they believed were going against their Law. It was a frightening scene. It has happened throughout history where one group takes it upon themselves to take the law into their own hands and judge others without a trial. One wonders what place this kind of response comes from. It certainly is hate filled. And my guess it also comes from fear. There is a perceived personal threat that must be removed. However, I like to think that fear is an acronym for False Expectations Appearing Real. What are we afraid of? Is it really something we need to look inward for? 2020 was a year full of pain and heartache. I think that some of the hateful behavior we see in ourselves and others comes from fear of the unknown fear of the Corona Virus, changes in government, loss of income, loss of freedoms, and the loss of friends and family. How do we manage that fear without projecting it on others?

Jesus gives everyone an opportunity for a moment of reflection. What was he writing in the sand? Was he writing down the sin of the others in the crowd? Was he just doodling while he was trying to think of what to say next? That period of silence before he spoke was full of power. My father used to do this. After asking a question he would sometimes be silent for a long time. I found that during this

period I would usually answer my own question. I once asked him about this because I thought it was clever. He confessed that he would do this when he did not know what else to say! But Jesus's pause was very deliberate. He gave everyone a moment to focus on their own sin and their own imperfection. And then his message was that the sins of the woman and the men do not define them. He says, "Go and leave your life of sin." He forgives the woman in this gesture and saves her life at the same time. He offers her a New Life. And he offers new life to the men as well.

The season of Lent gives us time to reflect on where we have been and where we are going. We can free ourselves of some of our sins and our imperfections. We can create some new habits and ways of behaving. We can also drop our stones and our judging of others. The message in this scripture for me is that our focus should not be on our mistakes from our past, but what steps we can take in the future to be a better person.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

Who do you identify with this scripture lesson and why? Are you feeling condemned or are you ready to throw stones?

Is it time to forgive someone you have condemned or wanted to throw stones at and how might you do this?

What mistakes you have made in the recent past that you can forgive yourself for and how might you do this?

MARCH 14

4TH SUNDAY OF LENT

SUBMITTED BY DENIS LARRICK

SPIRITUAL REBOOT: HOLD FAST

PHILIPPIANS 3:12-16 NRSV

Have you ever been cussed out by a bunch of ants? I haven't. If I accidentally step on their home, they don't gripe about it. They simply put what is sacred in their foremost thought and secure their eggs. Then they move on to the next most important thing, which is shelter. They don't mourn what they have lost; they don't try to move big rocks to make their home perfect, they just work around the obstacles to move forward and never look back.

One day as a wee nerd, my parents took me to meet one of my heroes. Allen McClelland is known nationwide for the amazing model railroad that filled his basement. This was no holiday display. It was on par with a fine computer simulation game today, and it took a dozen Sheldon Coopers to operate it in "scale time" as if it were a real money-making industry. The detailed mountains and buildings were astounding. As I commented to Allen that I could never build something as good, he walked over to the "town" of Blackstone and picked up one of the houses. The back of it was just a blank piece of cardboard! "I knew that if I were to ever build something like this, I had to accept that it couldn't be perfect. It had to be just good enough."

Christ calls us to move towards perfection, but He doesn't expect us to ever do everything right. Only He is perfect, and when He was calling to God to "take this cup from me" He was probably questioning that. No, He doesn't expect perfection from us. He just wants us to follow His Divine Example and become better over the long term, even if we occasionally fall off the wagon. He even loves our warts and kisses our boo-boo's when we fall.

There is a difference between moving towards perfection and being a "perfectionist". I love building things in my shop, but whereas my friends can make a napkin sketch and go right to the tools, I must sit down at the computer and make the project in full detail, often on a 3D program. I must assuage my fears that I might be disappointed in the product if I didn't completely think it through. Who knows how many times I will re-read this very devotional, changing just one word each time because it "just didn't live up yet." For years in my home shop, I have had a sign that reads: "There comes a time in the history of every project when it becomes necessary to shoot the engineers and start production!"

We will never get it all right, as a person, as a church, or as a society. We must truly down deep accept that. But we will get better if we follow that “set of rules” that He gave us. Psychologist Emile Coue taught “every day in every way I’m getting better and better.” Or as the Japanese auto manufacturers put it, “Kaizen” - “continuous improvement”.

However, there is one VERY big component that we haven’t mentioned, and without it we will not get better. In fact, we may backtrack.

“Forgive yourself, you are not perfect. Show yourself Grace, you are still learning. Show yourself patience, you are on a journey.” - Shannon Yvette Tanner

“Forgiveness is the greatest gift you can ever give yourself.” – Maya Angelou

How many hours, days, weeks have you retreated to the cozy comfort of the cinema of your mind, reviewing the many ways you have fallen short? How many times has your progress forward been caught in the endless traffic jam of your inner cars honking at you for taking a wrong turn? How much of your life has been wasted sitting at your inner computer, searching for the “Undo” key?

“If only I would have... (fill in the blank), I could forgive myself.” Yep, there is that old “I” word again. And until we accept that there are just some things we can’t do ourselves, we will not learn that reflex to “default” and depend upon “He Who Can.” It’s OK to lean on Jesus. He can forgive what you can’t. To move forward towards the perfection that he calls us to approach, we must step aside. To move forward, we must let Him pass us up and take the lead.

Here’s a little secret: the Latin “perfectus” didn’t mean “everything just so” but instead it simply meant “complete.” And to be a follower of Christ means that you are spiritually complete. Just being a Christian already makes you perfectus!

“Better today than yesterday, better tomorrow than today.” That is all Jesus asks of you. When you look back over your life, it will not be about the things you got right. It will be about celebrating your journey of improvement over the years to become that better Christian person. “Lord, I ain’t what I oughta be, and Lord, I ain’t what I wanna be, but thank you Lord, I ain’t what I use t’ be.”

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

When you find yourself “crying over spilt milk” how do you move to a better place?

Do you “default” to leaning on Christ, and if not, what would it take for you to learn that reflex?

How can you wrap your mind around having to give up being perfect so that you can become perfect?

SPIRITUAL REBOOT: THE GODS WE MAKE

EXODUS 32:1-14 NRSV

The opportunity to comment on this passage from Exodus comes at a providential time. My Sunday School Class, Soul Builders, is reading “Words of Life: Jesus and The Promise of The Ten Commandments Today” by Adam Hamilton. We discussed this passage in our last session.

The Israelites were camped at the foot of Mount Sinai. God had come down the mountain to give them the commandments and talk of His covenant with them. Afterward Moses went back up the mountain to talk further with God. He had been gone forty days and forty nights when the events of this passage occur. Moses left Aaron in charge while he was gone. The Israelites were anxious about their future and sought Aaron’s help for a way forward. Although the Israelites promised God they would follow his commandments, their anxiety had overridden their agreement to do so. Perhaps Aaron wanted to comfort them by suggesting something that was familiar to the way they had worshipped before rather than being openly disobedient to God’s commandment. In fact, he wanted to honor God with a feast. God, however, was not pleased and was angry enough to destroy the Israelites had it not been for Moses interceding on their behalf.

The text makes me examine my own faithfulness to God and his commandments. After all, unlike the Israelites, I have known of God’s covenant with us since my earliest church teachings. It is not new learning.

My grandmother was a perfect example of how to keep my focus on God. She was widowed at 44, with three daughters still at home—my mother (4) and my two aunts (12 and 17). In order to keep her children and her home, Gramma Lottie took in boarders. Still, there was a time when she was \$5 short of her mortgage payment on the due date. My aunt, the middle sister and worry wort of our family, kept asking, “Momma, what are you going to do? Are we going to lose our home?” A devout Lutheran and a pillar of her local church, my grandmother replied, “There is no need to worry. The Lord will provide.” Later that day, but in time to get the mortgage payment to the bank, a neighbor came to the back door to return \$5 she had borrowed from Gramma Lottie earlier that month. To me, my grandmother lived by the words in Psalm 104: “I will sing to the Lord all my life; I will sing praises to my God as long as I live.”

Even with my grandmother's example, I have struggled at times. I remember being angry with God when my father died. I was 31 and old enough to know better. I had my own apartment and an established career with Procter & Gamble. There was no reason to be angry with God but I was. At a time when I should have been asking Him for help, I became focused on work. Procter & Gamble does ask a lot from its employees but I went over and beyond what was required. When work didn't fill the emptiness I felt, I pursued an unhealthy relationship which only caused more sadness and, in turn, caused me to concentrate even more on work. I knew I wasn't happy but when "I thought" I prayed to God I felt like He never answered. I've reasoned since that when I was angry I probably wasn't really praying. I was just saying words and I wasn't really listening for an answer.

In spite of my behavior, He still opened a door—an opportunity to become a Dale Carnegie instructor outside of my regular job. In his book on how to stop worrying, Carnegie encourages readers to say The Lord's Prayer every day. I did and that was the first step to putting a focus on God back in my life. It has been a start/stop/start again/stumble-a-little/now-a-keep-on-going journey.

As we enter Lent, we think about giving up something and many times the choice is food. I think the more purposeful choice might be to give up a barrier that keeps us from a full relationship with God—from putting Him first, from making "things" (like work, sports, cell phones, pride, keeping "up" with what someone else has or does) more important than Him. In the past several years, I have also chosen to put an unexpected act of kindness into every day during Lent. This helps me find a way to love neighbors and strangers as God has asked us to do and provides a way to honor Him for not turning away from me when I turned away from Him.

Adam Hamilton explains one reason he wrote his book was to help the reader see the commandments not as "thou shalt nots" but as "thou shalt." "They are words of life; guideposts and guardrails aimed at helping us experience the goodness and beauty that God intended," he writes. They start with the words "I am the LORD, your God."

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

What "thing" or barrier in your life is distracting you from focusing on your relationship with God?

What commitment(s) are you willing to make to give up that "thing" or barrier during this Lenten Season?

What benefit(s) will you receive from the change(s) you make?

SUBMITTED BY GARY PARRISH

SPIRITUAL REBOOT: RESIST

MATTHEW 21:1-11 NRSV

Resist. To resist the “crowd mentality” is the challenge. How do we get caught up in the crowd only to find we have done something terribly wrong? Even so the love of God redeems.

Over the past year it seems we have witnessed an almost countless number of “crowd mentality” incidents. Our news outlets have flooded us with the stories. Large gatherings have turned into violent and destructive mobs culminating in the horrifying scenes at our Capitol in January. In most cases people had congregated peacefully and for good reasons. Then something happened – what caused some of them to snap and lose control?

In our scripture lessons for this Sunday we hear two stories as recounted by the disciple Matthew. These are two tales of “crowd mentality” with vastly different outcomes.

The first from Palm Sunday itself tells of Jesus’ triumphal arrival in Jerusalem. He rode on a donkey from Bethphage to Jerusalem. The very large crowd that formed would have been mostly poor and of very limited means. It is likely that many owned little more than the clothes they wore and yet they gladly spread their cloaks and robes in the road to welcome and glorify our Lord. Matthew recalls how the crowd was chanting:

“Hosanna to the Son of David!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

It must have been a hugely uplifting and positive experience for anyone who was there. I find myself trying to imagine what it would have been like to be part of the throng that day.

The second story is from just a few days later and it’s hard to imagine a more different scene. Jesus had been betrayed, arrested, imprisoned, and now brought before Pilate along with another prisoner for judgment. The local leaders, described as “chief priests and elders,” provoked and spurred on the crowd to spare Barabbas and condemn Jesus. We know the outcome and it was shocking and gruesome.

Part of the great tragedy I believe, is that there were almost certainly people who were part of both crowds. On Palm Sunday they were outside Jerusalem joyously and jubilantly welcoming Jesus. And then just a few days later they were before Pilate crying out for torture and death screaming “Let Him be crucified.” What happened to turn them this way? Why did they not defend their Savior?

The question I find myself asking and struggling with is how would I have acted if I had been part of the crowd before Pilate? Would I have had the courage to intervene? Would I have spoken up and shouted “This is wrong – spare them both?” The truth is that if I had been there I do not know how I would have acted. I can only pray that when confronted with such a dilemma, I will have the courage to make the right choice and speak up.

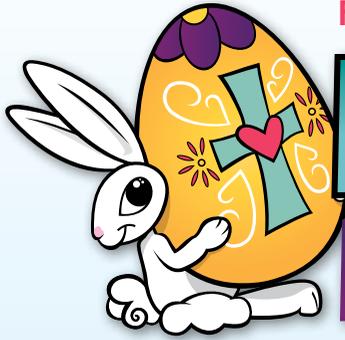
We all know that it was Jesus’ destiny to die for our sins and be resurrected. That should not stop us now or then from doing everything we could to save Him. God, in His ultimate wisdom, would still have fulfilled His will to show forgiveness and redeem humankind.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

If the tables were turned and Jesus had been part of the crowd what would He have said and done?

What is or have been my personal “crowd mentality” moments? How did I respond?

In retrospect what might I, or should I have done differently?



FREE OUTDOOR EVENT

EASTER EGG HUNT



March 21, 2021

1:30-4:30pm

1345 Grace Ave., Hyde Park



- Egg Hunt & Scavenger Hunt for families
- Visit www.hydeparkchurch.org to register starting Feb 15th!

Check our website the day of event for updates if needed

www.hydeparkchurch.org

Usually a series of three services over three days mark the heart of Holy Week. In Latin these three days are called the “Triduum” (which simply means “the three days”). These final days of Holy Week are the most sacred in the Christian calendar.

Maundy Thursday starts the 3-day cycle. The church community gathers to remember Jesus’ last supper with his disciples. We call to mind the night that we remember week in and week out in the Eucharist, and Jesus’ words about the bread and wine: “this is my body, and this is my blood.” The word “Maundy” in old English means “mandate” or “command.” There are actually two commands on Maundy Thursday, and they are connected.

The first command is the Holy Eucharist (Great Thanksgiving or Holy Communion): “Do this” Jesus says, “in remembrances of me.” In his classic understanding on holy communion, the Anglican Theologian Gregory Dix wrote:

“Was ever another command so obeyed? For century after century, spreading slowly to every continent and every country and among every race on earth, this action has been done, in every conceivable human circumstance... [people] have found no better thing than this to do for kings at their crowning and for criminals going to the scaffold.”

Indeed, this mandate to remember Christ in the Holy Eucharist continues to shape the life of millions across the planet week in and week out. This holy meal connects us to those who went before us, with us at table now and all those yet to partake of this holy meal.

There is a second, and I would argue deeply connected commandment. On Maundy Thursday we read John’s account of the last supper. John doesn’t mention bread and wine. Instead the action centers around Jesus’ washing the disciples feet. Jesus says, “if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet.” The teacher spends his last night with the disciples connecting the dots. To remember Jesus is to serve another. Jesus models for us servant leadership through humility.

On this Maundy Thursday holy night we are given a double “mandate or command.” It is to receive the Body and Blood of Christ through the mystery of God’s mercy and grace. We are filled with the Spirit to serve as Christ’s disciples and wash the feet of others through acts of love and humble Christian service.

In Christ, Pastor Dave

Words of Love and Life From the Cross:

The crowd in Jerusalem has shifted from the joy of Palm Sunday hosannas, to the angry jeers of Good Friday's "crucify him." As Jesus carries his cross, for his own crucifixion, what happened?

Jesus taught a new way, a new truth, a new life, and in the process shifted the paradigm for life. Jesus' agenda was to move society from exclusivity to inclusivity; salvation through the empire and religious dogma, to salvation through God's unconditional love. Jesus' agenda was to move humanity from violence as a means to an end to a non-violent lifestyle, participants in the kingdom of God, which is at hand. Jesus offers a new paradigm for life, moving us from a dualism that demands winners and losers, to a "oneing" that values the least, the last, the lost; a movement that values the worth of all people regardless of race, class, sex, and economic status.

Yes, Jesus had spent the last three years teaching a new reality that sought to turn the world "right side up," disrupting the status quo, and the religious establishment did not like it. Consequently, on a Friday afternoon Jesus hangs, nailed to a cross, speaking his last words of a new "way, truth and life." Hanging from the cross Jesus speaks:

1. A Word of forgiveness (Luke 23:33-34)
2. A Word of presence (Luke 23: 39-43)
3. A Word of relationship (John 19:25-27)
4. A Word of strength (Mark 15:33-34, recalling Psalm 22)
5. A Word of life (John 19:28, recalling Psalm 63)
6. A Word of victory (John 19:29-30)
7. A Word of trust (Luke 23:46)

This Good Friday Christ invites us into the life-giving power of His words from the cross. The wonderful hymn asks the question: Are you able? May our answer be: "Lord, we are able. Our spirits are thine. Remold them, make us, like thee, divine."

Through Christ, Pastor Doug

APRIL 4

SUBMITTED BY REV. DR. CATHY JOHNS

EASTER!

“Love is come again”

There is a hymn that I love that we never sing on Easter. The text, written in 1928 by J.M.C. Crum, is powerful. The tune is a haunting French carol written by Martin Shaw. It celebrates the Resurrection of Jesus with the image of a green blade rising from the earth. The first stanza follows:

“Now the green blade riseth, from the buried grain.
Wheat that in the dark earth many days has lain;
Love lives again that with the dead has been:
Love is come again, like wheat that springeth green.”

In the season of winter, especially this year, we long for spring. We yearn for the new life that springs out of the ground and offers our eyes a feast as red bud trees and cherry blossoms explode. We long for brighter days, days of joy and freedom from fear.

The power of the Risen Christ conquers our fear and restores life as the final stanza proclaims:

When our hearts are wintry, grieving, or in pain,
Jesus’ touch can call us back to life again,
Fields of our hearts that dead and bare have been:
Love is come again, like wheat that springeth green.”

This Easter, I invite you to open your heart to the Risen Christ so that He can restore life to your weary, wintry heart! Jesus rose from the dead to conquer death and bring new life. The Resurrection is not just about Jesus; it’s also about you and me. It’s all about God’s immeasurable love for you and for the world. COVID-19 and death do not have the final word: Christ defeated fear, sorrow, and death on Easter morning. Alleluia!

This Easter, sing and celebrate the good news: Love is come again! Christ is Risen! He is Risen, indeed! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Pastor Cathy Johns

HOLY WEEK & **EASTER SERVICES**

APRIL 1 | **Maundy Thursday**

7:30pm *Online Only*

APRIL 2 | **Good Friday**

7:30 pm *Online Only*

APRIL 4 | **Easter**

9:00 & 11:00am *Online Only*



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