

Easter Sunday, April
24



Lenten Devotio ns 2011

Ash Wednesday,
March 9 through

Ash Wednesday
Wednesday, March 9
by John Kiltinen
St. Mark's, Marquette

Read: Joel 2: 1-2, 12-17

Let your broken heart show your sorrow; tearing your clothes is not enough. (Joel 2: 13a)

The Old Testament Prophet, Joel, calls the people to repentance. This part of verse 13 reminds us that we need the season of Lent, that starts today, to repent just as the ancient Hebrews did. He goes on to remind us that God will accept us into the fold from which we may have strayed in spite of having many reasons not to, but a true repentant spirit, not just the outward signs of repentance such as the tearing of clothes, is necessary.

Let us pray: May this Lent be a time for us to learn what true repentance means for us.



Thursday, March 10
By, Pauline Kiltinen
St. Mark's, Marquette

Read: Isaiah 58:1 - 8

Yet day after day they seek me, and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that practiced righteousness and did not forsake the ordinances of their God. (Isaiah 58:2)

The 58th chapter of Isaiah begins with a call to speak loudly to the assembly - "Shout out, do not hold back! Lift up your voice like a trumpet! "

Is this to announce a joyous celebration? No! It is rather to call attention to the empty religious practices of fasting and humility and wearing sackcloth, all the time ignoring the poor, the oppressed, and the bonds of injustice.

Such outward signs, however vivid, of penance and piety "will not make your voice heard on high," says the prophet. Bowing one's head in humble posture is simply not enough, says the prophet.

So what is acceptable to the Lord? Sharing bread with the hungry, bringing the homeless poor into your house, clothing the naked - these acts are what the Lord desires. Then, ah then, "your light shall break forth like the dawn" and you will be surrounded by the glory of the Lord.

Let us pray: May we take another look at our righteousness, and be sure that our practices of faith always draw us closer to God. Amen.

Friday, March 11
By, Ray Berg
Eden, Munising

Read: Matthew 5:23-24

Reconciliation

Our hearts need to be cleared – when we have caused hard feelings or are otherwise indebted to someone, then our gifts are not pure. God wants us to reconcile our differences. When Christ was preparing his gift, his life, as our salvation, he examined his gift. He went to the mountain and he prayed. He would be giving up his very life. He knew he must prepare. Even for his very life. He asked the Heavenly Father to take this cup from him and then he prayed "not my will but Yours!"

Let us pray: Father, we ask that you would make us aware when we need to rectify something before offering our selves or our talent to your service. Our hearts are being constantly bombarded and in need of reconciliation with our brother and/or sister. Create the desire to have a pure heart and fill us with love. In the name of our precious savior, Jesus Christ. Amen

Saturday, March 12
By, Pastor Bonny Kinnunen
First, Iron River

Read: Psalm 19

The Wonders of the Lord

¹The heavens keep telling the wonders of God,
and the skies declare what he has done.

²Each day informs the following day;
each night announces to the next. (Psalm 19.1-2)

A child was asked once, what is the most wonderful thing that they have ever received. They answered, “a pair of skis when I was 10.” A wise person was asked the same question and they said, “The love of Jesus Christ.” And yet another said, “Family.”

Each day, there are wonders of the Lord shouting at us sometimes or sitting quietly waiting to be noticed. “The heavens keep telling the wonders of God.” What are the wonders of God that God is revealing to you today?

As I sit at my desk, the sun is shining brightly outside. The temperature is cold at 7 degrees. And I am upright and breathing. I have family who loves me even in my most contrary state and a God who even died for my sin. Yup, this is a good day.

I invite you to thank God for the wonders that he has made. Just look around, check it out ... and remember one child told God that he thought that the stapler was the greatest invention. Imagine that. The stapler the greatest invention. Yup, the Lord's greatness is in the eyes of the beholder.

Let us pray: What are you thankful for today?

Sunday, March 13
By, Sandy Travis
Bethany, Republic

Read: Mark 6:1-6

When I first returned home after being gone from the UP for several years, I was welcomed warmly. Unlike Jesus' reception in Nazareth, my husband, daughters, and I were warmly received by our family, friends, community, and especially church. It was such a glorious feeling to be so loved by all the people we had not seen for many years. We had no great miracles to perform but, only tales of our journeys to other states.

I find it difficult to understand the reaction of Jesus' loved ones upon his return. Jesus must have felt so disappointed to find this type of reception from his friends and family. I feel truly blessed that my family and I were not treated this way but were welcomed home so warmly.

Let us pray: Dear Lord, Please let us all welcome each other daily with God's love and always live in faith and peace. Amen



Monday, March 14
By, Ray Berg
Eden, Munising

Read: 2 Corinthians 5:2-6 & 10

Our Heavenly Dwelling

As we wait for the Lord's return we want and hope for the spiritual body that will be ours in Our Heavenly Dwelling. This is something provided by God and is pictured as something we put on and wear as a garment. We must all be responsible and liable to God's judgment for our lives as Christians while in the body. Although our body is wasting away, we are responsible for our actions while in it. Paul has believers in mind in this reading.

Let us pray: Dear Father, as mere humans we try to move forward to our heavenly home. We know that home will be beautiful and will be pain free and of a different nature. Father we do look forward to being in your presence and to enjoy that existence. We know that presence will be the best part of life. In the meantime let us do our best for you. Let us live our life on earth as near to Jesus' life as we can. Show us our path daily. Be with us and give us what we need to live your example. Help us to be faithful. In his precious name. Amen

Tuesday, March 15
By, Pastor Jim Duehring
Prince of Peace, Harvey

Read: Psalm 32

The title of this psalm in my Lutheran Study Bible is “The Joy of Forgiveness.” What can possibly be the connection between joy and sin? Psalm 32 doesn’t mince words about the connection. “Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven...” (verse 1). Forgiveness is certainly God’s doing. It is part of God’s steadfast, gracious, righteous character to show mercy. Forgiveness is the bridge that allows us to go from being convicted and entrenched in our sin to experiencing the joy that God wishes for us.

Of course we have some role in this bridging according to this psalm. We can clam up and keep silent. We can muck around and wallow in our sins. They have an amazing power to hold us tight and zap from us any joy. But, there’s hope. There’s this bridge of reconciliation. When I hide my sin, my strength gets dried by summer’s heat. But when I confess sin, I have access to this amazing grace of this righteous God. Modern psychological speak would call it cathartic to let it out. Don’t hold back. Tell it to the Lord in prayer. You don’t have to go on the Oprah show to bare your soul. This listening God of ours is quite sufficient. God stands ready to hear our confession, and to pronounce forgiveness to us. What a joy that is! What a wise thing to be practicing—daily confession!

Let us pray: Gracious Lord God, your holiness need not isolate us from you though sin is ever with us. We humbly confess it. We humbly ask for forgiveness. Take this stinging and heavy burden of sin from us. We joyfully receive what you promise for us—a clean slate! We are so grateful. Amen.

Wednesday, March 16
By, Ray Berg
Eden, Munising

Read: Luke 7:36-50

Jesus anointed by the sinful woman

This woman heard about Jesus being in a certain place and arranged to be there herself. Her life was filled with sin and she may not have comprehended exactly who he was. However, as she came into his presence she began to be aware of her sins and knew that Jesus was the answer. She wept tears to the point of washing Jesus' feet with her tears. She brought perfume with her and poured it over his feet. With her hair she dried Jesus' feet. His reputation preceded his presence. The Pharisee even thought to himself that Jesus should know who she is and would not defile himself if he perceived her history. In truth Jesus knew and also knew that she knew. Her faith in him saved her. He forgave her of her sins and they were many – therefore she loved Jesus many times over.

Let us pray: Oh Precious Father, these lessons given forth in Luke are so precious in that someone having led a sinful life and recognized Jesus without ever having set eyes on him. She wept many tears upon contact with him. She had brought perfume and she kissed his feet and poured the perfume on his feet. Let us be mindful of our sinful nature and that we have been forgiven so much. Let us remember to be kind and generous in our forgiveness or others as Christ has forgiven us. We ask this in Jesus Holy Name. Amen

Thursday, March 17
By, Susan VandeWalle
Messiah, Marquette

Read: Genesis 3:1-7

The Fall

¹ Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'" ² The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, ³ but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" ⁴ "You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. ⁵ "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." ⁶ When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. ⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

"...you will be like God, knowing good and evil." Is ignorance really bliss? Would I rather never know darkness (evil) and therefore, possibly never appreciate the true beauty of God's light (good)? I have a poem I keep taped near my desk. It is called "I wish you enough" by Bob Perks. It is a poem of contrasts:

"... I wish you enough happiness to keep your spirit alive and everlasting. I wish you enough pain so that even the smallest joys in life may appear bigger ..."

We had everything in the Garden of Eden, yet we chose to disobey God. I cannot begin to understand why we humans

were allowed to fail God's test in the Garden of Eden. As written in Isaiah 55:8: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. Sometimes I mourn the gift of free will God has given us. Why can't he just make me do what I should and let me love him that way? Of course, I know you cannot 'make' anyone love you. It must come freely. **Sometimes**, I can appreciate the lesson of contrasts. I learn so much more through my mistakes. Walking my dog at 6 AM on a blustery January morning in Marquette without snow pants is a mistake I made only once. But, like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, even when I'm told what to do, being human and fallible and with free will, I often make the wrong choice. Like my dog with her tail between her legs, when I come back to God after my mistakes, when I recognize my wrongs and prayerfully return to him, he blesses me with renewed forgiveness and love. Perhaps this is how we must grow closer to our Lord in love. To relish the light he brings to our world, despite our repeated mistakes. By recognizing our own human weakness and fallibility and glorying in the wonder and awesomeness of God.

Let us pray: Heavenly Father, please open our hearts and minds so we may clearly see how we fall short of what you created us to be. Help us be humble to ask for your forgiveness. Thank you for the grace you so freely grant us. Amen.



Friday, March 18
By, Ray Berg
Eden, Munising

Read: Matthew 4: 1-11

The Temptation of Jesus

Jesus does a lot of teaching. Here he is saying to us that none of us are above being tempted by sin. Even Jesus, Son of God, Christ, our Lord was tempted. Think of this Jesus: Jesus was alone, praying for 40 days - that's over a month. He was tired, he was very hungry. This is his human body. It has needs - rest, nutrition, protection. Satan offered Jesus food, prestige - if only Jesus would bow down to Satan. He shows us that we must not follow Satan. We must not be susceptible. Tell Satan to 'get behind me.' Jesus says we must worship one God. The Triune God! He led an exemplary life and it is an example for us to follow. Forty days is a long time. Jesus was tired, hungry and he knew what was coming. He dreaded it. He would suffer. However, he did not fail. He rebuffed the enemy. We can too with Jesus help

Let us pray: Our Dear Heavenly Father, Even Jesus was tempted as he prepared himself to make the most difficult sacrifice of his short life on earth. Satan went to him and attempted to make Jesus worship Satan instead of his Heavenly Father. He knew just what to offer Jesus as Jesus had been many days in the mountains; he was tired and weak, he was hungry and needed food. Jesus, Son of God, of the triune God he had the right answers. He rebuked Satan and kept his eyes on God, his Father. Guide our thoughts and words as we are tempted in our everyday life. Stay with us Father and keep us strong and faithful to you and able to resist temptations. Thank you, Lord, in Jesus precious name. Amen

Saturday, March 19
By, Ray Berg
Eden, Munising

Read: Matthew 19, 21-35

Parable of the Unmerciful Servant

This rings true with today's economy and life style. What if we/you were behind in your mortgage payments and your house was being foreclosed upon. Your home was being taken away from you. Then out of the goodness of his heart the loaners decided to forgive your loan. Paid in Full. What if you then turned on a neighbor who was indebted to you for an even smaller amount and he begged your indulgence. "Please give me time! I will find a way to repay you!" However, you, instead, called in his debt in an unkind way. Jesus forgives us all our sins. We don't deserve this forgiveness. He willingly died. He gave up his mortal life. He separated himself from his Father - for the purpose of forgiveness of our sins. How could we refuse forgiveness of others after Christ made the supreme sacrifice for our forgiveness? We must forgive others as we ourselves have been forgiven. God said, my blessed Son shed his blood and this shed blood washes away all sin. My Son is so precious to me and only this is powerful enough to wash away such a terrible thing.

Let us pray: Oh, Blessed Father, Today we are reminded again that Jesus gave it all and it was all for us. There was no limit to his sacrifice and he expects us to be generous and kind in our forgiveness of others. Our plea is that you give us huge hearts filled with faith and memories of your sacrifice to make our salvation available as a gift from you. Let us remember that you said we need to be willing to forgive others as you have forgiven us. In the name of our precious savior, Amen

Sunday, March 20
By, Sally Pouliot
First, Gladstone

Read: John 3:1-17

Probably one of the most recognizable scripture passages in the Bible is **John 3:16**. It's everywhere – signs at sporting events; spray painted on viaducts; graffitied railroad cars; printed on mugs, t-shirts, note pads, candy, book markers. It also happens to be my favorite Bible verse and I wear a silver bracelet with the words engraved on it. ***“God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life”.***

Who does that? Who lets his son die for us so that we might live? Who loves us that much? God does! And all we have to do is believe. Amazing! This is what it's all about ... in a nutshell or rather on a cross ... Jesus died for us that we might live. And yes, all we have to do is believe.

Let us pray: Thank you God for not giving up on us and for sending your Son to die for us that we might have eternal life. Amen



Monday, March 21
By, Shirley Norquist
Community Lutheran, Palmer

Read: Psalm 121

As a twenty-something year old I sang a beautiful anthem with a church choir. “He watching over Israel slumbers not nor sleeps...” still sounds in my head as I read Psalm 121. My heart and mind revisit the tranquility produced by that piece of music.

What else goes through my mind as I read this Psalm?

“I lift my eyes to the mountains—where does my help come from?” (v. 1) Looking “to the mountains” doesn’t really help me, but it does make me concentrate on who made the mountains, on who made the heaven and the earth. I am taken outside myself and given a new perspective, a different perspective on my problem. I am taken to the foot of God’s throne where I can sit and be protected.

“He will not let your foot slip--... he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.” (vv. 3-4) Think on that for a moment. It means God watches over me, over you, all the time. Are you able to imagine God doing this and never getting tired or sleeping? His Word promises it. Incredible!

God’s watching over me includes protection day and night. He is beside me (vv. 5-6) long term—during my entire lifetime on earth (v. 7) and for eternity (v. 8). I want the help this psalm talks about. Endless. Tireless. I hope you do, too.

Let us pray: Maker of heaven and earth, open my heart and mind to this help that only you can give. Help me rest in you when I am tired and to realize daily that you are constantly watching over me, walking at my side. Amen.

Tuesday, March 22
By, Ray Berg
Eden, Munising

Read: Luke 17: 3-4

Sin, Faith and Duty

According to this, there seems to be no limit to how many times we forgive a brother. If he says "I repent" then we must forgive. Did Jesus ask how many times must I forgive? No, God's Son is so precious that when he willingly gave up his life blood it was powerful enough to cleanse all of us forever! We must forgive others and ourselves as God has forgiven us. God, the Father, would not have required the very life of his Beloved Son if it had not provided salvation to the world.

Let us pray: Heavenly Father, Today we ask that you would give us tender hearts that are full of forgiveness. Sometimes we find it difficult to forgive when our feelings are hurt or when we are wronged. Remind us, Father, how Christ willingly gave up his life. The plan was to surrender his life in order to save our spiritual life. If God forgives us for our transgressions and shortcomings, how can we not forgive others? In Jesus precious name we pray. Amen



Wednesday, March 23
By, Ray Berg
Eden, Munising

Read: Romans 4:1-5 and 13-17

Abraham – Father of Many Nations

Abraham was a man of great faith. He and Sarah were old people who had no children. God promised them offspring. But it took a long time. They were promised a huge family. Then Abraham's precious son was called into duty. God required Abraham to make this long awaited much loved son into a sacrifice. How could God who promised a huge family, also take this son away. In biblical terms this story parallels Jesus life. Abraham took this beloved son to the site where his very life would be required by God. Because Abraham went forth in dramatic faith --"Our Father will provide the sacrifice" he told his son when he asked where is the sacrifice. In the end God did provide a substitute. We also don't have to die. Our faith in Christ allows Christ's death to provide us with eternal life. He died for us!

Let us pray: Dear Father, You promised Abraham a huge family and they believed. We are asked to be believers as well. Father, we pray to have that faith in Christ that Abraham had. Give us that faith in Christ that Abraham had. Give us that trust and love of our Savior that promises eternal life. In Christ's precious name, Amen

Thursday, March 24
By, Ellen Swenson
First, Gladstone

Read: Matthew 6:16-21

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal.....For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. (*Matthew 6:19-21*)

During some of my most impressionable years as a teenager, I was caught up in the phase of play-acting. Surely, to receive the accolades just like the wonderful actors in movies was the highest praise a person of high ideals could achieve. All the wonderful awards and perks that were attached to the profession had to be the goal of many a 16-year old dreamer.

Growing wiser, I realized that this pretending, this play acting, was just for show. There was no godliness in acting out make-believe roles, along with short-lived, empty praise. For me, seeking a relationship with God took on a completely different production.

Private talks with the Lord give me the spontaneity. Talking freely with Him is quality time, leading to quantity, as well. To me this is not belief in itself, but a growing devotion to God, and love toward man. As this treasure is stored in my heart, I need no higher praise than His grace and mercy.

Let us pray: Gracious God, you have blessed us and surrounded us with your praises. Receive our thanks in humble awareness of all that we are and hope to be - a sign of your great love.

Friday, March 25
By, Ann Christiansen
First, Gladstone

Read: Luke 19:1-10

The name Zacchaeus means pure or righteous one. This Zacchaeus was far from either of these. He was a tax collector, therefore, he would be hated by the Jewish people. He was a chief tax collector which means he would be doubly hated. He probably had very few friends because of this. He had heard of this Jesus and all he had done and wanted to get a glimpse of him. He wanted to see him so bad that although he was a government official, he didn't care if it was embarrassing. He ran ahead and climbed into a tree. Perhaps he thought if he could just see him he could improve what must have been a lonely life for him, even though he was rich. He was looking for something. Imagine his surprise when Jesus stopped beneath the sycamore tree and called him by name. Zacchaeus had been looking for Jesus but Jesus had found him. Many people wonder where God is in their lives, but never go looking for him like Zacchaeus. Jesus even wanted to go to his house. Zacchaeus was so happy!! Here he was a social outcast and Jesus wanted to go home with him. Others began to grumble. How could Jesus associate with a sinner like Zacchaeus? But then Zacchaeus repented and he vowed to give away half of his wealth.

When Zacchaeus says he will give half of his possessions away, it reminded me of when I was in Tanzania. We were at the Lutheran Junior Seminary which is a secondary school for grades 6-12. We were there on a mission trip. It was our last day and we were all feeling kind of blue. I was on my way back to the dining hall where we were staying in a store room there. A young girl named Salome stopped me and said she had something for me, but she didn't want to give it to me out where the others were so would I step inside so she could give it to me. I went into the room and she proceeded to tell me that she didn't have much but that she wanted to give me a

gift. She brought out a pair of her school socks and presented them to me. With tears in my eyes I accepted her gift. It could have been a brand new car and it wouldn't have meant more to me than that pair of socks, for you see most of the children are orphans and she only had two pairs of socks. She had given me half of what she had. She had given it to me with so much love. I will never forget that moment, just as Zacchaeus never forgot the moment Jesus came to his house. Zacchaeus, who when called unexpectedly by Jesus, was converted from a despicable tax collector to a follower of Christ. God says if we seek him, we will find him. Jesus is there to save us when we are lost. Jesus said the reason he had come was to seek out and save the sinner. Jesus' mission, that of a Shepherd, is to seek and to rescue the lost. When we are hurting and our lives are messed up, we need Jesus' mercy and grace. Jesus came to save a sinner like you and me!

Let us pray: Heavenly Father, may we come to know that no one is beyond your grace. That you are actively seeking us when we are lost. Our sorrows are your sorrows and our joys are your joys. What joy you must have felt watching an enthusiastic, short sinner, scramble down from a tree and be changed in an instant into a saint. Help us to remember where all our blessings come from and let us be as willing as Salome to share them with others. Let us be good stewards of your gifts and always have a place in our homes and hearts for you. In your precious Son's name, we pray. Amen



Saturday, March 26
By, Sally Weingartner
Emanuel, Skandia

Read: Deuteronomy 30:15-18

Choose Life or Choose Death

Deuteronomy 30:15 gives us a choice between life and prosperity or death and adversity. God leaves that choice to us. If we obey his commandments we can live and have a good life, but if we disobey we can perish.

During our lives we have many choices to make. Some are easy, like what will we have to eat for breakfast; others are harder, like should I repair my car once again or should I just try to find a way to purchase a new one. A decision that is easy for some of us and hard for others is – should I follow God and do his will, and if I don't follow him, what are the alternatives. For me that was an easy decision – I will follow God's will. I will do my best to be a good person and live as God wants me to. I also know that if I stray from God's will, he sent his son Jesus to die for our sins so that we can be saved and completely forgiven.

Knowing God's saving grace makes all the difference in my life. I know that I'm not perfect, but I also know that I am forgiven. I choose LIFE. What will you choose?

Let us pray: Dear Lord, please help me in times of indecision. Guide me in making the right decision for the right reasons. Amen.

Sunday, March 27
By, Pastor Kate Schrub
Emanuel, Skandia

Read: John 4:5-26

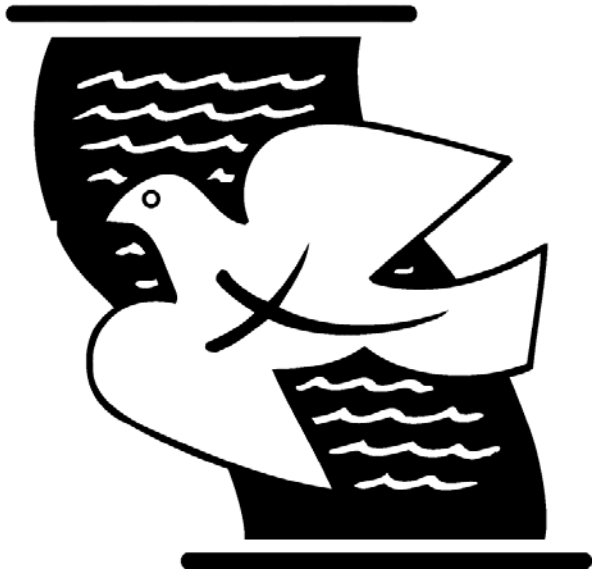
I am a strong believer that the Gospel of John is one of the most fascinating books of the Bible. This book is brimming with metaphors and deep, hidden meanings which can make the gospel challenging to understand but at the same time give a straightforward basis for our faith (shown in John 3:16). The story of the woman at the well is a classic example of this.

In our John text for today, Jesus, tired from his journey, stopped at a well in the Samaritan city of Sychar. There, Jesus met a Samaritan woman and told her to give him a drink of water which violated two social mores being that men were not to publicly speak to women and that Jews were not to speak to Samaritans. The woman was astonished that Jesus, a man and a Jew, was speaking to her. But Jesus ignored these social mores and challenged her that if she asked him, he would give her living water. The woman, like other people that Jesus encounters, takes the term “living water” literally. She views this water to be running water as opposed to still water from the well. This “living water” of which Jesus speaks has a deeper meaning than simple running water, which is necessary for life and is temporary. Living water is necessary for eternal life and is everlasting. The woman comes to the understanding that this water is no ordinary water and asks for it. She also comes to understand that this is no ordinary man who is speaking to her. He is the Messiah. She goes out into her village and bears witness to what the Messiah has said to her.

How much do you thirst for living water? Are you ready to ask for it? The Lenten season is a time to be reflective of our faith and our need for God in our lives. The time is now to be open for Jesus to refresh us with the living water and give us

life. Only He has the power to quench this thirst and give us eternal life.

Let us pray: Gracious God, You are the fountain of living water. We ask that you give us this living water always so that our thirsts are quenched and that we may know the truth in Jesus Christ and through Him, have eternal life. Amen.



Monday, March 28
By, Elaine Bodell
Bethany, Escanaba

Read: John 4:27-42

In this Gospel reading Jesus is first talking with a lone woman. This is very unusual because Jewish religious leaders rarely spoke with women in public. Jesus was very obviously making a point that his message was not only for men, but for everyone. This was unusual behavior for this time period and it proclaimed and affirmed to the world that His message was for both women and men: it was for everyone, male and female, Jews and Gentiles, young and old, everyone.

Let us pray: Gracious Lord, help us to spread the “Good News” to all peoples that God knows and cares about everyone; whether male or female, adult or child, Jew and Gentiles and all races. All are welcome. Amen.



Tuesday, March 29
By, Elaine Bodell
Bethany, Escanaba

Read: 1John 1:8-10

Do you remember when you were a child and did something wrong, such as breaking a toy, dish, or whatever? What did you say when your parents asked “who broke this?” Did you confess? Were you truthful? Or did you blame it on your sister, brother, or the family pet?

If you were truthful and confessed, you probably just had a talking to and told to be more careful next time. But, if you lied and later were found out were you punished?

This is the same way our God and Father will treat us. If we confess our sins, we are forgiven, however if we lie and our lie is later discovered we have not followed his commandments or the word of God and will not receive forgiveness.

Let us pray: Lord, help us to know when we are not acknowledging our sins. We want to be faithful to you so that you can be faithful to us. We want you and your Word to be an important part of our lives. Amen.

Wednesday, March 30
By, Elaine Bodell
Bethany, Escanaba

Read: Exodus 17:1-7

“The whole Israelite community set out from the Desert of Sin, traveling from place to place as the Lord commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was not water for the people to drink. So they quarreled with Moses and said, ‘Give us water to drink.’

Moses replied, ‘Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you put the Lord to the test?’ But the people were thirsty for water there and they grumbled against Moses. They said ‘Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?’

Then Moses cried out to the Lord, ‘What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me.’

The Lord answered Moses, ‘Walk on ahead of the people. Take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. I will stand before you and by rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink. So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel. And he called the place Massahi and Meribah because the Israelites quarreled and because they tested the Lord saying, ‘Is the Lord among us or not.’”

Let us pray: Lord, we often forget that you love and care for us and that we are your children, help us not to fear what will come, not today or tomorrow, but rather help us learn to trust that you will be with us and always will protect us. Amen.

Thursday, March 31
By, Donna Caron
First, Gladstone

Read: Psalm 95

A Call to Worship and Obedience; what does this mean for us? In Psalm 95, verse 8, “Do not harden your hearts as at Meribah,” we are reminded of the rebellion of Israelites on their journey to the Holy Land. Have you ever felt that you have wandered from the path of worship and not been as obedient? Sometimes we struggle with this and yet we find our way back. If you truly “trust in the Lord with all your heart” we do find our way back. In our wanderings remember even then, we are not alone. Our God is with us! Perhaps we are wandering to allow ourselves more time to reflect on God. Is it so we become more obedient to his teachings upon our return? This makes me think, as I have before, of our Lord as our greatest shepherd; the head of our flock who calls us to worship and to be obedient of his teachings.

Amidst our Lenten journey may we be mindful of the path chosen, not only the path chosen for us by God, but ... God’s path we choose.

Let us pray: Dear God, Let us keep within our hearts the sacrifice of your only son. May you always be our guide and keep us in your gracious care. May we go forth and share in your Good News. Amen

Friday, April 1
By, Phil Norman
Bethany, Escanaba

Read: Ephesians 5:8-14

Let the words work on you! This is the light of the Lord is his word! Believe that the word is true and good. Then you will know what is light and what is dark in your life. Then you will be awakened in Jesus Christ and you are his light in the world! Do not have fear in you for that is the dark. Speak the good news of the gospel and be that light in all that darkness around you.

Let us pray: Dear Heavenly Father, I ask that help me to renew my mind with your words, to help to change me to please you. In Jesus name, Amen.



Saturday, April 2
By, Tera Kossow
First, Gladstone

Read: Matthew 7:1-3

I chose to direct your attention to this passage as it is written in Eugene Peterson's *The Message* because I always have a hard time thinking of seeing someone with a speck in their eye, while I might have a log in my own, as it is written in the NRSV. Who has ever had a log in their eye? It's hard to imagine. However, a smudge and a sneer are easy to visualize.

"Don't pick on people, jump on their failures, criticize their faults - unless, of course, you want the same treatment. That critical spirit has a way of boomeranging. It's easy to see a smudge on your neighbor's face and be oblivious to the ugly sneer on your own." Matthew 7:1-3 from *The Message*

I think that as far back as I can remember, I've been told to treat others like I want to be treated. Maybe it started with words like "if you don't share, no one will want to play with you." As I got older and entered junior high and high school, the painful lessons about gossip and bullying became real to me. I decided to act as though others couldn't hurt me, and even became a champion for the underdog... in all the wrong ways. I used my hurt feelings to fuel anger against those who were picking on others, especially those I considered my friends.

As I hardened myself to the brutalities the world has to offer, I missed out on a lot of the joys. I was so busy noticing the faults, or smudged faces, of others, that I couldn't recognize how terrible the sneer on my face was. My life has changed so much since then because a little bit of kindness goes a long way. While I do still feel anger toward those who hurt me, and maybe even more so for those who hurt the ones I love, I choose not to fight the world's battles. Each angry person I

encounter deserves a little kindness, a little of the love of God, a little of the healing power of Jesus, and maybe today I'm the one who will show it to them.

God of comfort, be with me as I walk through this world of anger and pain. By the power of your Spirit, stir up in me the strength to be a calm in the storm, a light in the dark, and a smile in the midst of sadness. Let me remember to treat others as I would want to be treated. Amen.



Sunday, April 3
By, Terry Kuescher
Messiah, Marquette

Read: John 9:1-7

A Man Born Blind Receives Sight

As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, saying to him, "Go was in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see.

The spiritual writer, the Apostle John expresses a heavenly perspective. Lessons from Heaven shine down upon us for guidance. God uses events to prove a point. God is the "light of the world", while he is in the world. Lightness trumps darkness. God has used this event of Jesus healing a man born blind to prove this point.

Let us pray: God's good works are revealed in our everyday lives. May he shine his light upon those that are sick and in pain. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Monday, April 4
By, Teresa Laakso
Bethany, Republic

Read: Psalm 139: 23-24

No one knows us like God, our Father. He knows what is in our hearts even though we do not know at times. Those times when we are selfish and want only what is best for ourselves, we lose sight of God's grace and love.

When we pray and ask God to enter our heart, we find that He already knows our thoughts, feelings and needs, and that all we need to do is accept his gifts. When we feel lost, we need to look to the grace of God and he will show us the way to everlasting life.

Let us pray: Dear God, shed your Light on us and reveal to us the way to your glory. Amen.



Tuesday, April 5
By, Dave Strom
First, Gladstone

Read: Psalm 51

In this Psalm, David pleads for forgiveness for his sins. Every person needs to find forgiveness for his or herself. When we struggle with this we need only to go to Calvary. There we see a broken and bloody Jesus on the cross, breathing forgiveness down on his torturers with his dying breaths.

When we realize the wondrous forgiveness bestowed on us 2000 years ago; one cannot help but to share it with others.

Often the person we struggle the most to forgive is our self. Francis MacNutt has said, "If the Lord Jesus Christ has washed you in his own blood and forgiven you all your sins, how dare you refuse to forgive yourself."

In this season of Lent we must be humbled by the sacrifice of God's only Son for the forgiveness of our sins, and energized to share that forgiveness with others.

Let us pray: Create in me a pure heart O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Psalm 51:10



Wednesday, April 6
By, Tim Keuscher
Messiah, Marquette

Read: Ephesians 2:1-10

From Death to Life

You were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient. All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else. But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ – by grace you have been saved – and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God – not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

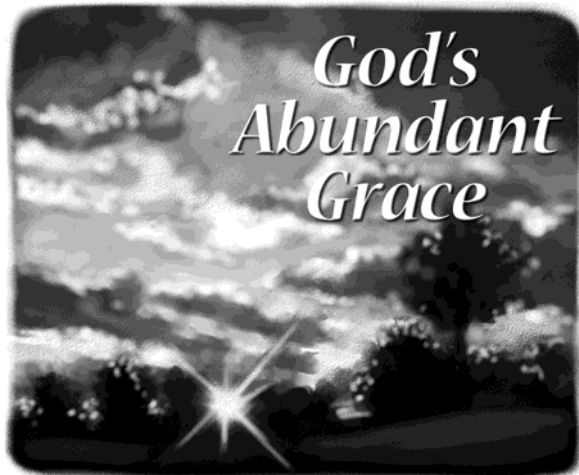
Written by the Apostle Paul, this passage and strong message of grace is very down to earth. *The American Heritage Dictionary*, c. 1985 defines grace as “a Divine love and protection bestowed freely upon mankind. The state of being protected or sanctified by the favor of God. An excellence or power granted by God.”

It has been proposed that there are no other world religions that believe in grace.

... “been saved, through faith, and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God — not the results of works, so that no one may boast.”

A strong message of grace. A gift from God.

Let us pray: May God's love bestow us with mercy and grace, enriching our lives with faith. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.



Thursday, April 7
By, Kris Anderson
Bethany, Escanaba

Read: Colossians 2:13-14

Harboring grudges or ill-feelings toward another person, or to continually dwell on misdeeds of the past is so easy to do yet at the same time so unproductive and destructive. I, as I suppose many other people do, feel guilty because not only is it unhealthy for the mind and soul it is negative and unchristian.

When I was recuperating in the hospital from an accident, I realized that I had to give these thoughts and feelings up. I truly understood that Jesus had died on the cross for us and had taken our sins away. He literally cut us from our sins so we could become closer to God. I realized that instead of belaboring on the negative acts and thoughts of the past I could learn from them. I learned that there is something positive to be learned from every bad situation and bad encounter. It could be 'that person meant well' or 'I don't want to do that again!' I also like to take the approach of 'I choose not to...' rather than saying I can't do something or change someone.

I honestly feel that I am a better person since I have changed my attitude and my approach to life. I can lay my head on my pillow at night knowing that Jesus died for me and has cut away my sins. And when I awake in the morning I feel that it is a new beginning in my life as it is a gift from God.

Let us pray: Thank you Lord for freeing me from the feeling of guilt for my thoughts and misdeeds.

Friday, April 8
By, Phil Norman
Bethany, Escanaba

Read: 1 Timothy 1:12-14

There is always hope in your life to be a servant to our God. Give great thanks to God and believe that your prayers will be answered in God's time. Ask God to help open your heart to let the Holy Spirit and God's Grace to work in you, and through you, with love.

Let us pray: Our heavenly Father, I ask that you show me your love, understanding, grace, and put your guiding hand on me, to make me righteous in your sight O Lord, so that I may be a blessing to others. In Jesus name, Amen.



Saturday, April 9
By, Pastor David Van Kley
Messiah & St. Mark's, Marquette

Read Genesis 45:1-15

It was just the sort of crazy thing you might first read about some morning in “top stories” at www.msn.com. Joseph, his father’s favorite son, is sold into slavery by his brothers. Yes, **sold**, for a profit! Then his brothers soak Joseph’s robe in blood so their father will believe he’d been torn apart by wild animals.

Years pass. Against all odds and despite a stay in prison, Joseph rises to power in Egypt, becomes the King’s top advisor. When famine settles over the Middle East, he is placed in charge of food distribution. And who should come to buy food for their families but his own brothers! Of course, they do not recognize him, leading to the encounter described in today’s reading.

Stunningly, Joseph re-visions all that has happened to him as an act of God! “Do not be distressed or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me to preserve life...to keep alive for you many survivors...it was not you who sent me here, but God.” A flood of reconciling tears that washes away the poisons of the past. Joseph and his brothers hold each other and talk.

What a turn of events! What generosity! What forgiveness!
What a miracle! What joy out of sorrow!

Joseph’s story tells us that it’s possible to see God at work in all things, even those which seem utterly evil. It’s as if Joseph, alone among the characters in this story, wears a set of 3-D glasses. He sees beyond the actions of his brothers to the good intent of God. God is always working to turn evil to good, to bring joy out of sorrow. Joseph saw the apparent

tragedy of his life through the lens of faith. Which is why he is able to forgive!

Joseph's story also tells us that reconciliation is possible even when wounds are deep. The word of forgiveness, spoken sincerely and at the right time, can undo lifetimes of animosity. Abraham Lincoln once said we defeat our enemies when we make them our friends.

So, Jesus forgives from the cross, making us his friends.

Wearing the 3-D glasses of faith, can you see God at work in your life?

Are there relationships, once close, that have been severed? Will a word of forgiveness bring the reconciliation God desires?

Let us pray: Good and gracious God, you turn mourning to dancing, the cross into resurrection. Give us faith to see you at work and give us courage to follow where you lead. In Jesus' name. Amen.



Sunday, April 10
By, Teddy Nelson
Bethany, Isabella

Read: John 11:1-7, 11-27

Jesus used Lazarus' death as an example to the people to show them the power of "God's Glory," in our lives, as he raised him from the dead, and as he told Martha. I AM the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.

As we all encounter death in our lives, with the passing of our loved ones, we all share in the same sorrow as Martha was feeling in the passing of her brother Lazarus, but we know that Jesus gives us eternal life through the Cross.

Let us pray: Gracious God, you gave us the great "I AM," who will never die, as you gave us your "Son, Jesus Christ" as the only agent of our final resurrection with you, who gives us eternal life now and forever, through the Cross. Amen



Monday, April 11
By, Teddy Nelson
Bethany, Isabella

Read: John 11:32-35, 38-45

Jesus Wept

Jesus said to her, “Didn’t I tell you that you would see God’s Glory if you believed?” I know that you always listen to me, but I say this for the sake of the people here, so that they will believe that you sent me. Many of the people who had come to visit Mary saw what Jesus did, and they believed in him.

We can all understand why Jesus Wept, as we bury many loved ones and shed many tears over them. Jesus’ purpose was to teach us that if we believe in God, and believe also that he sent us his Son who died on the “Cross” for all of us, that we might be forgiven and spend eternity with him, Our Risen Lord.

Let us pray: Gracious God, thank you for your Son, Jesus Christ, who has absorbed our sins on the “Cross,” so that we might also believe and be raised with Jesus, to the “Glory of God the Father.” Amen.

Tuesday, April 12
By, Preston Caron
First, Gladstone

Read: Exodus 15:13

“In your steadfast love you led the people whom you redeemed; you guided them by your strength to your holy abode.”

Verse 13, from Chapter 15 of Exodus is known as The Song of Moses. This verse speaks of the Israelites escape from Egypt into the wilderness. As we walk through our own spiritual wilderness, we are comforted by the knowledge that when we live a life centered in Christ, his steadfast love will lead us to the day he welcomes us home.

Let us pray: Lord Guide Us.



Wednesday, April 13
By, Gisele Duehring
Prince of Peace, Harvey

Read: Ezekiel 37: 1-14

What stands out to me (no pun intended, though God did cause dead bones to stand!) in this passage is part of verse 12: "... the Sovereign Lord says: O my people..."

Amazing! Amazing that God can give dried up bones tendons and flesh and skin and breath and life... and hope. Even more amazing? We are His! He addresses us: "*O my people.*" That is the heart of this scripture.

And it's a two-way street. Consider this short prayer: "**You are mine and I am yours, Lord. Amen**" How is it I can pray this prayer as a celebration, and that very same prayer can also express my deepest heart during times of fear, anger, sadness, forgiveness, trying, failure, giving, and shock? That same prayer hits the spot during times of denial, struggle, pain, guilt, loneliness and thanksgiving? That same prayer says it all during times of depression, play, embarrassment, receiving, reflection, rebuilding, creativity, joy, acceptance, and hope? The Holy Spirit stirs the words into declaration, into seeking comfort or guidance, into thanksgiving, into whatever God knows brings us more closely together. That one simple prayer covers the bases.

In December, 2010, pollsters announced that for the second year in a row, "whatever" was crowned the most annoying word in the English language. Thirty-nine percent (down from 45% the previous year) of the Americans polled would like to rip "whatever" out of the dictionary, set it on fire, and give that most dismissive and juvenile word a proper burial.

Can you imagine if God answered prayer with, "Whatever."? That is why sometimes people do not take a thought, a feeling, an idea, a concern, a question to God in prayer. Out of

fear that it is too trivial. That the person who might pray is too trivial. You are not trivial; I am not trivial.

More than you matter to your friends, family, or anyone else, you matter to God. It's not about what you do. It's not about what you say. It's not about your successes or failures. It's about a God who loves you more than you will ever be able to comprehend.

***Let us pray: Dear God, I am yours and you are mine. And because of that, I am not trivial. Thank you!
Love, Your Child***

**Something to
Think About**



Thursday, April 14
By, Terry Frankenstein
Bethany, Escanaba

Read: Matthew 6:14

For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

When our son was young, he told little lies, and it was easy to forgive him. After explaining the importance of telling the truth, our son's penalty may have been a brief stay in the time-out chair. As a rebellious teenager, it wasn't always so easy to forgive his poor decisions and unwise behavior. While continuing to be clear about what was right, my husband and I needed to deal with actions such as breaking curfew or careless driving. Consequences weren't as simple and included grounding or loss of car privileges. Often-times our son wasn't alone when making choices, and it could be very difficult accepting the friends leading him down alternative paths. Hoping to keep him on the straight and narrow, his father and I sometimes made it very difficult for him to spend time with these "friends."

A decade has passed since our son was a teenager, and he turned out just fine. As he has grown, I have grown in my faith and now realize the missed opportunity I had back then: to forgive the friends considered "inappropriate." Instead of shutting them out, I could have prayed for them and tried harder to understand and accept what was motivating their behavior. I could have forgiven them.

Let us pray: Father, Please help me to forgive and to replace my anger with prayer and understanding.

Friday, April 15
By, Betsy Koski
Emanuel, Skandia

Read: Psalm 130:1-2a

“Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice!”

As we walk through the days of our lives, we usually find that our experiences are made up more of occasional hills and valleys, rather than mountaintops and deep pits. However, it's what we do and who we turn to in the hills and valleys that prepares us for those times of deep pain. As we strengthen our relationship with God through Bible study and daily prayer, we come to trust that God hears us no matter where we are on the road. We learn that God *really is* always listening. And when we come upon those times of crying out from the depths of our sorrow or sin, we can be assured that God hears us, even if we can't hear him.

We know we have no right to expect forgiveness; we understand our own sinfulness. But we learn something else in our daily communication with God. We learn that, just as the Bible tells us over and over again, God's steadfast love truly does endure forever and we can trust in God's promise of forgiveness. God acts in his own time, but while we wait we can do so in confidence and hope, for we know that God hears us, loves us, and is walking with us – even in those times of deepest pain caused by our sorrow or sin.

Let us pray: Lord, help us to trust that you hear all our prayers. Forgive us, strengthen us, and renew us in your love, for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Saturday, April 16
By, Gaylene Bradley
Bethany, Escanaba

Read: Matthew 21: 1-11

I was once described by an ex-girlfriend of a boy I dated in college as looking really good . . . from a distance. I remember it even today as if it were yesterday – not because I was insulted, but because I thought it was hilarious! How many of us live our lives the same way – lives that look good from a distance, but do not hold up under close scrutiny? The crowds who praised Jesus as he rode into Jerusalem and lay palm branches down in his path looked like Christians from a distance, but later, as we look closer, we find they were the same people who yelled “Crucify him. Crucify him.” If we were to die today, would Jesus see our lives as “looking really good,” or would we fail to enter the kingdom of God on closer examination?

Let us pray: Dear Lord, please help me lead the kind of life that is good in your sight. Help me to keep my focus on You and not on the things of the world that “look good” at first, but would lead me away from your Grace. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.



Palm Sunday
Sunday, April 17
By, Pastor Katherine Finegan
Bethany, Republic

Read: Matthew 27: 11-26

“I wash my hands of the whole thing!”

We’ve heard it, or even said it before. People say it when they don’t like what’s going on but they can’t seem to stop it, and somehow they think that “washing their hands” of it lets them off the hook.

Pilate washed his hands. Perhaps he was even the first to coin the phrase. Matthew writes, “[Pilate] took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. “I am innocent of this man’s blood,” he said. “It is your responsibility!”

But despite the gesture, Pilate’s responsibility remained. History records and our creed confesses that Jesus was crucified under Pontius Pilate. Pilate’s name is forever linked with the death of an innocent man, with the death of the Son of God. Pilate washing his hands did nothing to remove his guilt. He was complicit in the crucifixion of Jesus, no matter how hard he tried to cleanse himself of that blood or wiggle away from that blame.

And we are guilty too. World hunger, injustice, racism, poverty - these things feel out of our control, and yet we are called to act. We might “wash our hands” of it. We might think that someone else, someone who has more money, more time, or more energy will take on those challenges. We might think that or even hope that, and let ourselves off the hook of doing anything, but whatever we might tell ourselves, our responsibility to act as the Body of Christ in the world remains.

Because for people of faith in Christ, washing does not let us off the hook of action, rather washing sets our feet on the path

of action. Thankfully, it is not we who wash our own hands, but Christ who washes us, and not just hands, but heart, and spirit, and soul. In the waters of baptism, we are washed. And in that water, God claims us as God's own children, and sends us to be the presence of Christ in the world.

Pilate washed his hands in an effort to get away from his own responsibility and guilt. But his guilt remained. Christ washes us, and effectively removes our guilt. We are forgiven. And we are equipped to take on the biggest challenges that the brokenness of this world can dish out.

Let us pray: Gracious God, you wash us clean. Give us courage and wisdom. Give us energy and creativity to be engaged in the troubles of this world, and make a difference, no matter how big, no matter how small. In Jesus name I pray, Amen.



Palm Sunday

Monday, April 18
By, Pastor Doug Norquist
Community Lutheran, Palmer-Suomi

Read: Philippians 2:5-11

Sometimes with a familiar passage like this one, the trick for me is to let the Word speak in simplicity. For me, Holy Week and Easter are about this: hearing the old story with a simple heart in which it becomes new again. New and esoteric insights are fine if they are true. But there is no need to go looking for them. What I need, by God's grace, is to see the simple Truth afresh. For example –

I see to what lengths our Lord Jesus was willing to go, in order that the world might be redeemed. I will never plumb the depths of this crazy Eternal Love: He emptied Himself, took a slave's position; died a death no one should have to die, least of all God the Son. It seems cockeyed, and I for one take comfort even in the strangeness of it. This must be *God's* love at work: what mere human would ever have thought of such a thing? Yes, I already know the story: God the Son died for the sake of the world. But may familiarity never rob me of my astonishment, my sense of how utterly and beautifully odd it is.

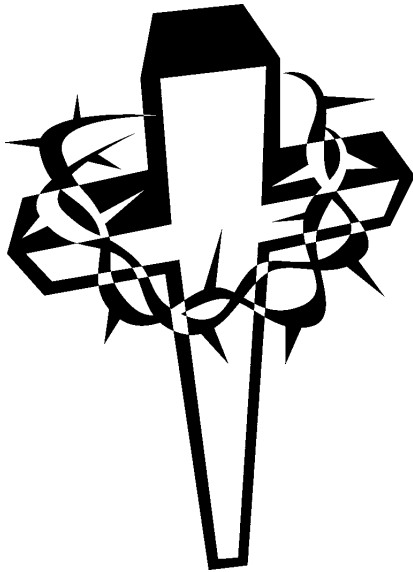
That leads to a second thing. If Jesus did this for the sake of the world, He did it *for me*. That may be the only thing that could make this beautiful oddity even odder and more beautiful. Jesus died in crazy deathless love. He is in hot pursuit – not of a religious ideal, but of you and me. If I miss that, I miss the whole point.

Yet there is more – more oddity, and more beauty. In His crazy-love pursuit to redeem the world, Jesus wants to give you and me a piece of the action! The Servant asks us to be servants like Him. Not in the same degree, we could never do that. But in a real and true way, you and I can be like Him. “Freely you have received, freely give” (Matthew 10:8). “It is

enough for the servant to be like the Master” (Matthew 10:25). “Go, make disciples of all nations...” (Matthew 28:19).

Christ’s death shows us God’s love. Christ’s resurrection shows us God’s victory. It’s really true. It’s really for me and you.

Let us pray: O God, help me never to lose track of how strange and beautiful and real this love of Yours is. Help me to see Your love, today and every day, and never to stop receiving it; for only as I receive from You, do I have anything to give. Amen.



Tuesday, April 19
By, Phil Norman
Bethany, Escanaba

Read: John 12:1-11

To love your Lord with all your heart, mind and soul before anything else! Give glory to God by giving your most to him for there will always be the poor in the world. By giving your love to God, he will make you blessed, and then you can be a blessing to others.

Let us pray: Dear Heavenly Father, as it is written in John 8:31-32: “Jesus then said to the Jews who had believed in him, if you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples and you know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” In the power given to us in Holy Baptism, and the Grace of God, set us free to be a blessing to others. In Jesus name, Amen.



Wednesday, April 20
By, Diane Srutowski, LLM
Trinity, Stonington

Read: 1 Corinthians 1:18-31

Have you ever been going along in your daily life, feeling good about yourself, feeling like you are doing the right things, living the way you think God wants you to live, thinking you can do it all and do it correctly – all by yourself? And then, all of a sudden, wham – a series of events occur and you are literally knocked to your knees. That, my friends, is the difference between righteousness and self-righteousness. In the past six months, I have experienced that little nudge to the back of my legs to bring me to my knees and I have scratched my head and wondered just exactly what was going on. So, what are we supposed to do when God gives us these little reminders? We are supposed to pray!

The Apostle Paul had helped form the church in Corinth and then moved on to other mission fields. While in Ephesus, he learns of serious problems within the Corinthian church and writes a long letter addressing some of these issues. In 1Corinthians 1:18-31, Paul addresses the leaders of the church who are relying on earthly wisdom and human standards and bickering amongst themselves for the top leadership positions. He tells them that “the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.” There's that self-righteousness again, we need to pray for righteousness. We don't need to know all the answers; we just need to know where to go to get them.

Let us pray: Heavenly Father, thank you for your words of wisdom and guidance in my life. Help me to always remember to turn to you in prayer, especially during those times when I am knocked to me knees by life's circumstances. Thank you for your love, patience and understanding when I stumble and fall. Amen.

Maundy Thursday
Thursday, April 21
By, Teddy Nelson
Bethany, Isabella

Read: John 13:12-17



After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table with them, “Do you know what I have done to you?” You call me Teacher and Lord – and you are right, for this is what I am. So if I your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have done set you an example, that you also should do, as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

Jesus has cleansed us as sinners, for we all fall short of the Glory of God. No matter how hard we try by ourselves, we all need to help one another, to cleanse our hearts with God’s love. We will never be as good as “Christ” for we are all born sinners, but we have to keep on trying and asking for the cleansing that Jesus has shown us, to share with our neighbors.

Let us pray: Gracious God, by the gift of your Grace, through your Son, we can be cleansed from our sins, as we strive to do better daily, and come to Christ, as we forgive our neighbor, and ask for eternal cleansing in Christ Jesus, that he has installed in our hearts, by the way of the “Cross.” Amen.

Good Friday
Friday, April 22
By, Dave Johnson
Seminarian awaiting call



Read: Hebrews 4:14-16, 5:7-9

It's Good Friday, and this is the day in which Jesus made the greatest sacrifice for all of us. This is the day that Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice for us; the one that was pure, spotless, and without sin gave his life on the cross so that he could bear our sin and punishment for that sin for us. Throughout Jesus' life on earth he bore everything that we bear. He bore our joys, our excitement, and all the good things in this life. He also bore the hurt, the pain, the suffering, and finally on the cross sin. Jesus chose to bear everything in his life on earth that we all go through, not just the good but also the bad, so that he can give us everything that is his. That through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross and his soon to come resurrection, we gain through the gift of faith freedom from sin, righteousness, and eternal life. That's what we're reminded of in Hebrews that Jesus shared all the aspects of this life on earth that he possibly could with us including the trials and the temptations. Jesus went through all that we go through to bear this life with us; so that we don't have to walk through this life alone; we don't have to carry the burdens of sin, temptations, and the struggles of this world alone. Through our faith in Jesus he carries that load for us, and is always with us.

Let us pray: Jesus today I remember and thank you for choosing to bear not only my life with me but also my sin for me on the cross. Please help me to use the freedom you have given me through my faith and through the Holy Spirit to bear the burdens of the other people that I meet. Also, please send your Spirit here with me now to help me to remember that you are always here with me, and that you will never abandon me. Amen.

Saturday, April 23
By, Bonnie Bauerle
Bethany, Escanaba

Read: Matthew 27:57-66

As I write this, it is almost Christmas and time to think about the Baby Jesus. I am reminded of my trip to Bethlehem. It was a difficult time in the holy land and we were the only tour group at the place where they say Jesus was born. We gathered around the cradle scene and sang a lullaby to Him... "Away in the Manger." It is a scene to remember always.

Now we are looking at Matthew 27:57-66 ... Jesus has been crucified and Joseph of Arimethea has asked Pilate for the body of Jesus to prepare him for burial. Such a jump in thought ... from the birth of Jesus to his death. And who is this Joseph? Scripture tells little about him. He was wealthy and a disciple of Jesus. The Book of John tells us he was a secret disciple, meaning he did not go about openly declaring that he believed in Jesus and followed him. By asking Pilate for the body of Jesus, Joseph has become a bold disciple, no longer a secret disciple.

Joseph wrapped his body in fine linen, finer than what Jesus wore. Joseph placed Jesus in a new tomb and it was Joseph who rolled the stone in front of the tomb. There are many questions concerning this passage. Why was it Joseph who claimed the body? Where were the disciples we know so well? Why didn't they come for the body? My biggest question would be ... where would I have been? Would I have been with the two Marys who were outside the tomb?

My visit to the tomb was so memorable. We communed in the garden just outside it, in sight of the rolled-away stone. I knew Jesus was no longer there. That sight was so compelling and then we shared the Body and Blood of Jesus. Never has communion meant so much to me.

And now to verse 63. The Pharisees went to Pilate and said: "Sir, we have remembered while this imposter was still alive, He said, 'After three days I shall rise again.' He did rise again! He lives! Alleluia! I hear the words of the hymn "Good Christian Friends, Rejoice" (LBW 55) Jesus Christ was born for this." He was born to die to bring hope and comfort to all who have laid loved ones in the grave. He was born to die that our sins might be forgiven ... He was born to save.

Let us pray: Precious Lord, we are so humbled and grateful for what you have done for us on the cross. Help us give up being secret disciples. Help us to become bold enough to shout out for all to hear, the Good News of Jesus Christ, our risen Lord. Amen



Easter Sunday, April 24
By, Pastor Jonathan Schmidt
First, Gladstone



Read: Matthew 28:1-10

Easter morning brings joy, exultation, and delight. Christ is risen, Alleluia!

Over the years many different metaphors and images have been used to convey the glory and wonder of this day. Lilies, butterflies, the rising of the sun, and more give us a picture of what this day is all about.

But one of the most powerful is that of imprisonment. Indeed, we recognized that sin, death and Satan all “imprison” us. We are stuck in a jail of sorts, and we need out!

And out we get! In fact, the image of freedom from imprisonment on Easter begins all the way back at Christmas. Isaiah 61:1, a text used frequently during Advent as we prepare for Christmas, talks of the release of the captives, the freeing of those imprisoned. Like you and me – and it happens in the glory of Easter morning!

There it is, right there in Matthew 28:4 the promise of Christmas is fulfilled as the guards watching the tomb become “like dead men.” Ironic, isn’t it, that the ones watching the dead become “like dead,” while the dead comes to life to bring new life! *God is at work, and not even armed guards can stop it!*

And that is the good news – nothing can keep God’s work from working, from making a difference in our lives. The power of Easter cannot be stopped!

But wait a moment – just what were the guards there for to begin with? To keep Jesus in his prison-like tomb? Or to

keep others out, to keep them from discovering the power of the resurrection?

Pilate placed guards at the tomb so the body would not be stolen, and so *no one could get in to find the empty tomb!*

Guards, you see, can keep prisoners in, or keep others out! And these failed to do either!

The good news of Easter is that Jesus lives, that there is hope for us, that our prisons, whatever they may be, are no match for the resurrected Christ. But the good news is also that the message of Easter cannot be stopped! The good news is going to be heard, and heard loudly.

In the midst of our days, sometimes very dark days, when we seem to be imprisoned and find no escape, God acts – God acts through the crucified and risen Jesus to bring us hope and life – and God acts again to make sure we get the message. The good news of Jesus is proclaimed and witnessed in many and various ways as even the powers of evil cannot keep the good news contained. Just as the guards become “like dead men,” those forces which keep us from the good news melt away and are overcome by the one who was very dead, but now is very alive – Jesus, the Christ!

This coming week in our devotions (see www.prayfaithfully.org) we will take a look at stories in the Bible about witnesses and the word that cannot be hidden away. But in the meantime we rejoice this day in new life, in life which the power of death tried so hard to contain, but couldn't. We rejoice in Jesus!

Let us pray: God of new life, the good news is out! Jesus is risen and you have conquered the powers of evil. Make us mindful this day of all the ways in which you have freed us from sin and death. And make us mindful of how this day you have freed us and renewed us through the crucified and risen Jesus! Amen



Pray without Ceasing!

www.nglsynod.org/prayfaithfully

On behalf of the Northern Great Lakes Synod Prayer Ministry, we give our thanks to those who have written these devotions to share with us as we walk our Lenten journey to the cross -

- ✚ Participants of the Synod sponsored Prayer Workshop held at St. Mark's, Marquette in October 2010

- ✚ Members and Friends of the Prayer Ministry Lay School for Mission Class held at the Gladstone Campus in Fall 2010

If you are called to be a part of our Synod's ongoing prayer ministry - reading the daily devotions, writing devotions, or offering prayers on behalf of our brothers and sisters - you are invited to check out the Prayfaithfully.org website or go to the Synod's website (nglsynod.org) and click on the prayfaithfully tab. We welcome your partnership in ministry.

Journeying to the cross with you this Lent,

Rev. Jean R. Schmidt

Bethany Perkins

NGLS Prayer Ministry Coordinator