




**CALVARY** BAPTIST  
CHURCH

# **Dusty Feet: 40 Days of Following Jesus**

*Lent 2024*



## ***Walk Your Road***

*Dusty feet, tired from walking  
But you have beautiful feet  
You walked those roads  
And You gave hope to me.  
Calloused hands, tired from working  
But You have beautiful hands  
And the wounds there-in have given life to me  
And I want to know your beauty  
To hold it here in my heart  
Oh LORD, if only...  
I could make my road look like Your road  
If I could love the way You love  
If Your word in my heart  
Was the only thing I used to fill me up  
I want to place my feet where the wounded walk  
And where you learn to love no matter what the cost  
I want to go  
I want to walk Your road  
A broken heart for the wounded  
And Your's is the most beautiful  
Looking past our faults  
Dying to meet our need  
Weeping eyes for the sinner  
There's nothing more beautiful  
And LORD, I want the passion of those tears  
And I want to know your beauty  
To hold it here in my heart  
Oh LORD, if only...  
I could make my road look like Your road  
If I could love the way You love  
If Your word in my heart  
Was the only thing I used to fill me up  
I want to place my feet where the wounded walk  
And where you learn to love no matter what the cost  
I want to go  
I want to know how to walk Your road*

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# Lent 2024

*Oh LORD, if only...*

*I could make my road look like Your road*

*If I could love the way You love*

*If Your word in my heart*

*Was the only thing I used to fill me up*

*I want to place my feet where the wounded walk*

*And where you learn to love no matter what the cost*

*I want to go*

*I want to walk Your road*

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I can think of no better Lenten Prayer than these words. Jesus invites us to walk with him. As we walk, we learn the heart and the way of Jesus. Our only response to this gracious invitation is to pray that our road would be the same road as Jesus.

The season of Lent is one that offers us the opportunity to find the way of Jesus again. These forty days are meant to help us detach from the ways of our own plotting or that others would determine for us to find the road Jesus is walking through this world and to fill ourselves with his word. It is a path that begins in the dust of Ash Wednesday and will cause us to meander through the messiness and woundedness of our own lives and the stories others share. But it is only in those places that we learn the beautiful heart of Jesus and the love that spares no expense.

The pages that follow are attempts at finding and walking the road of Jesus. My prayer for us in these days is that Jesus will meet us in our longing, take us by the hand and help us to walk with him.

Blessings,

Monty

## Answering the Call

By Katherine Lowther

Those of us who are over 35 years old likely remember a time when everyone had a house phone and when it rang, someone would race to pick it up and breathlessly say “Hello?” before the caller gave up. Some might recall the days of the party line, when a call could be picked up by someone other than the intended recipient. Others may even remember picking up the receiver and being connected by an operator, an intermediary in the communication flow.

Nowadays, it isn’t uncommon to call someone only to receive a tinny voice encouraging you to “please leave a message after the beep.” You might reluctantly leave a message, immediately hang up and try again later, or simply attempt to connect via text. But in the back of your mind you wonder--Why couldn’t they take your call? Are they at the doctor’s office? Gardening? Playing the piano? Or--gasp--simply avoiding you?

I wonder how many of us avoid Jesus’s calls on a regular basis? When calling his first disciples, Jesus directly “cold called” four random fishermen and said, “Come, follow me.” They all instantly dropped what they were doing and answered--no questions asked, no pushing the call to voicemail, no hesitation whatsoever. Think of a time in your walk with Christ during which you were eager to soak up every word of the Gospel message, when every call for discipleship had you rushing to the altar, when every text from the scripture had you looking within to see how God could use you to serve him and others. What has happened since then? We don’t have to worry that God will give up on us, that someone will interrupt our private talks with him, or that we must wait until Sunday morning for the preacher to connect us to the Word of God. Take some time today to reflect on what barriers prevent you from answering Jesus’s calls, and strive to make time to not only talk to him, but also to listen to what he has to say to you.

### *Prayer for Today:*

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for continuing to call me to serve you, even if I don’t always respond. Help me to remember the joy that serving you brings each time I have answered the call. I pray to refocus my priorities so that when you call to say, “Come, follow me,” I no longer hesitate to pick up the call, but instead breathlessly answer, “Here I am, send me.” Amen.

## I Know He Cares

By Roy Griggs

During the past couple of years I have been doing a lot of research about the history of favorite hymns and their writers. When I read the scripture for this devotional one of those hymns came to mind, "Does Jesus Care?" When did Christ feel that He should be baptized? He had no sin to wash away. One writer suggests that this was the first event of His public life as the Christ, and on this occasion alone it would have significance and importance. Prior to this time He had lived in Galilee for thirty years, listening to Bible scholars and preparing for His work to come. All this time He lived knowing the true purpose of His life on earth. Jesus Christ simply wanted to show those who believed in Him, then, and for all others in the future, that He was human just as we are, and that as the Son of God, He had to come to earth in human form to provide for them the way to eternal life. He wanted to show them that He was glorifying His father who had sent Him to provide all believers with the way to God.

During this Lenten season when we are looking at Christ's life on this earth, it is a time for us to reflect on the gift Christ gave to all who will believe in Him, the greatest gift ever given, the way to eternal life. Truly we were shown that He cares. We know that He cares.

### *Prayer for Today:*

Our Heavenly Father, thank you for sending your only son to live among us as a fellow believer, that we might see eternal life is available to us through Jesus Christ, and that we need only to believe in Him. In His name we pray, Amen.





Edith Voogt, 5th grade

Mark 6:47-51  
Jesus Walks on Water

## Getting Your Feet Wet

*By Jennifer Ward*

Imagine finally having a chance to rest after days of chaos. You sit down to relax and scroll through social media and what do you see? A friend in need, struggling against the tide of their own chaos. What do you do? You could offer up a prayer and well wishes and keep scrolling, no one would blame you...or would they? To borrow a term from my teenage years, What Would Jesus Do? Rather, what did He do, regularly? Jesus has had a lot of chaos following Him everywhere and now He has stopped to rest. But when He looks out and sees his disciples struggling, He doesn't stop to offer a few words, He goes to them. The sea is rough, the wind is strong, and the disciples have the boat. He could stand on the shore and shout instructions; help them, help themselves. Instead, He steps into the storm and goes to them. How often do we see those around us in need and for one reason or another decide that the best we can offer is love and prayer? Now, I'm not knocking the power of prayer, not at all. But does the power of your prayer also come with action? Or are you content to sit on the shore shouting out solutions to someone else's problem? Notice in the passage, it doesn't say Jesus took the oars and took over. He doesn't even solve the problem for them, He just goes to them, knowing His presence means more than anything else He could do. So, now it's time for you to go. That friend who is struggling, they just need you to sit with them, to be there. Will you go?

### ***Prayer for Today:***

Father God, thank you for walking with us through all of life's ups and downs. It means more to us than we sometimes realize to know that we're not alone. Help us to be your presence in the lives of those around us each day. Give us the wisdom to know what to say and when to say nothing at all. Guide our hearts in love and our feet in your way. Amen.

Dear God,

Help me follow You.  
I want to love  
people like you do,  
Like everyone. Even  
the hard ones.

Love,  
Karis





## Love Your Enemies

By Vince DeYoung

We know we are to love our neighbor. But love our enemies? Seems impossible! Let's consider, then, what this instruction from the Lord means for Christians today.

Who are the enemies in our personal lives? Are they the ones who strike us in the face? The last time that happened to me was in a schoolyard fight many years ago. And no one has ever forced me to give them my coat or walk a mile.

In fact, many of us don't have the kind of enemies described in this passage. Yet we each have enemies – those who are hostile to our interests and welfare. A few examples:

- Computer viruses and internet scams - how can we love the nefarious people behind them? Perhaps the only way is to pray for them, that they would not have the desire to steal, or that someone would steer them from this way of life.
- A bad neighbor - an example is one who blares loud music or doesn't control pets. Or worse, puts a structure on your property! How do we love this individual? Maybe start by resisting anger (self-control). After a time (patience), consider giving the neighbor a call to plan a visit (peace). That worked for me one time. And pray for that person, as taught by the Lord.
- Aggressive drivers such as tailgaters – a very common “enemy” today. How do we love them? Bad ideas include gestures, slowing way down, or pumping the brakes. This is retaliation, not love. Instead, when it can be done safely, move to the right or pull over to allow the tailgater to pass. This is kindness, isn't it?

And kindness is loving your enemy.

### *Prayer for Today:*

Our Father in Heaven we praise and honor your Holy Name. We ask that you grant us a kind attitude toward those who would injure us in any way. Help us by your Spirit to show love for them like that shown for us in the Gospel. In the precious name of Jesus, Amen.

## Faith in Action

*By Suzy Thurman*

As I read this scripture, I was immediately transported back to my Beginners Sunday School class in Kansas City. I remember being fascinated by this story and seeing the picture of the man being lowered through the roof to meet Jesus. For some reason, the act of coming down through a roof on a bed was what held my interest in my four year old mind. Well, those days are long gone and with age and maturity, I can see beyond that action and see that the main focus of this story, at least to me, isn't about the man being lowered but rather of friendship and the faith of his friends. Their faith in Jesus was so strong that they risked their lives to help their friend because among the crowd that day were religious and governing leaders who thought following the laws of the day were more important than the wellbeing of others. Breaking those laws brought sharp consequences. However, the friends of the paralyzed man had such strong faith in the healing powers of Jesus, they risked their lives to help their friend.

I have been very fortunate to volunteer in the surgery area at Baptist Hospital for more than 22 years, and I have witnessed the strong faith of friends and families help in the healing of their loved ones. Such faith is hard at times but as I see them gather together in prayer, a certain calmness emotes and the presence of God is felt. These are people, too, who would go to great lengths to lower their loved one through a roof to the healing Master. No, the emphasis of this story is not the act of being lowered through a roof, but rather of friendship and strong faith that was shared, showing that Jesus can and does work miracles. The outcome may not be what we want sometimes but the faith in knowing and believing in Christ can help not only ourselves but others as well. Upon reflection, I know I have friends who have the courage and faith in Christ to risk all for me. I just hope and pray my faith is as strong.

### ***Prayer for Today:***

Thank you for loving me and giving me friends who have faith to wipe the dust from my feet when I am mired in mud. I pray You will give me the faith and courage to do the same for others. For it is through faith and belief in Christ that we demonstrate Your love for us. Amen.

## Foundation

*By Barry Lawson*

I'm going to run a marathon! "Are you crazy?" was my wife's response. I thought, maybe, 26.2 miles was a long way, but I had already made my decision. Now, where do I start? I had been a casual runner since my high school days on the cross country team, so I did have an idea of what would be involved. The training would require a good base foundation on which to build.

As I reflect on the scripture passage above I realized that a strong foundation plays a critical part in any project, relationship, or worthwhile endeavor, even marathoning.

The first steps of running a marathon are relatively easy. Getting to the finish line requires sacrifice, and dedication. Building a strong foundation in our relationship with Jesus Christ requires sacrifice and dedication as well. After accepting Christ as our Savior it is up to us to seek His instruction through prayer, Bible study, and conversations with other Christians. In other words, putting in the miles to run a marathon. Then put those instructions to use through our actions. Do as God says and practice what we preach. Essentially, do work for Christ and let others see Christ in us.

As I continue my walk/run with Christ, and weather life's storms, it all begins with a solid foundation. Oh, and by the way, I did finish the marathon!

### ***Prayer for Today:***

Our Heavenly Father, during the Lenten season, may we live with a sense of true gratitude for the ultimate sacrifice you made for us and the hope that it provides. Amen.

## On Second Thought

By Wade VanMeter

*Admit it.* You've done it. You've second-guessed all kinds of decisions in your life: a vehicle purchase, a new dress, your college choice, or that extra piece of pie at the church potluck. Whether you call it buyer's remorse or hindsight, the reality involves overconfidence or weakness. Take your pick. The Centurion in this passage made a choice and then changed his mind. This is normally not a big deal, but where God and faith are concerned, it takes on a whole new meaning. We all have choices. Throughout our decision making, God is still there waiting on us, present and available, for support, comfort, and guidance - *no matter the issue.*

So where do we stand when God calls us? Are we ready to come off the bench and step up to the plate? The Centurion second guessed himself when he asked Jesus to heal his servant. Are our requests too personal or selfish? Our relationship with our Creator can give us pause. Are we in awe of our Heavenly Father or intimidated by His power to say no? Do we have enough faith to ask ourselves hard questions in times of struggle? Do we offer prayers and praise in all things?

Jesus will ask great things of us during our journey. How will we respond? We can see ourselves in the place of the Centurion, the servant needing healing, or even Jesus in this story. We should strive to remain faithful and "keep our feet dusty" asking ourselves, "What would Jesus do?" What will you do given your choices? Proceed willingly or second guess as to what might have been?

### ***Prayer for Today:***

Lord, we cannot fathom your vision for us. Our daily choices can determine a path of holiness or helplessness. Guide us to seek a deeper relationship with you. Thank you for staying with us in our weakest moments and for our many blessings. In your name we pray. Amen.

## No Turning Back

By Rebecca Price

“I have decided to follow Jesus; no turning back, no turning back.”

I can say for certain that I have decided to go with Jesus. I have experienced the depth of his grace and mercy, and I cannot fathom a single second of this life without the sustaining power of his love. It is my sincere prayer that each one of you reading this today is with me on that decision. If you are unsure about Jesus, let me assure you that there is grace and mercy enough for every part of you if you reach out and take hold of it.

Next comes the tricky part: how do we follow Jesus? Well, Paul tells us to have Christ's attitude that is selfless and obedient – to be radically humble. In full transparency, my knee-jerk response to that is “yikes, that's tough.” That's just not my nature, and my guess is it isn't yours either. This world is loud with voices shouting that we are the stars of our own stories and success and admiration can be ours if we strive for them. Isn't that exactly the opposite of radical humility, selflessness, and obedience?

I have decided to follow Jesus, so I have chosen a path of radical humility, selflessness, and obedience. I am far from humble, selfless, and obedient, and I will continue to wrestle with the ways of the world. But I choose Christ no matter the cost, no matter how much it goes against my nature and our culture. I choose Christ no matter how much I have to daily struggle with being radically humble. I have decided to stick with grace and mercy, and the One before whom every knee will bow and tongue confess that He is Lord of all. There's no turning back.

“The world behind me, the cross before me; no turning back, no turning back.”

### *Prayer for Today:*

Oh God who is exalted to the highest place, what grace it is to come before you. Yours is the name above every name; nations and all people will bow before you – yet you still choose me. You chose to make yourself lowly and take my place on the cross. I cannot fathom the depth of your mercy and love for me. Help me to extend that same love and mercy to those around me. Make my attitude like yours and help me practice radical humility.





Charlie Lester, 5th grade

Luke 8:22-25  
Jesus Calms the Sea

## Of Fear and Faith

*By Carolyn Purcell*

In times of danger, fear is normal. Many years ago, when I was about to fly to England, alone, my mother told me she wished she had taught me to be more afraid. She saw fear as protective. Grateful that she had not taught me to be afraid, I viewed fear as a negative feeling that prevented you from living your fullest life. In today's scripture, Jesus sees the disciples' fear as lack of faith. Fear, while a normal part of life, is not part of God's original plan for us.

Throughout scripture, we are told not to be afraid with a promise. God is with us. God will protect us from the raging waters. He will go through the fire with us. But when we look around, we see ships go down, bodies lying beside bombed out homes, and hurricane-ravished remains of whole towns. It is hard, nearly impossible for some of us, to feel the loving presence of God with those images before us. Life seems unfair and it is, but there is grace. This is the place for faith. When we see those things, we have to remember the promises; memorize them from scripture or look for them in the songs we sing on Sunday.

When I think back over my life, there were many times when I was in danger and God protected me. There were even times when I did not recognize the danger until after the fact, too late to be afraid. We do not always feel it, but He is there. This is the purpose and promise of Easter, God's plan for victory over the Fall. Christ was not only victorious over death; He was victorious over everything that came with it, including our fear.

### ***Prayer for Today:***

Gracious and loving Lord, thank you for your constant presence and care for us. Forgive us when our faith is weak. Strengthen our faith so that when life's raging storms come, instead of crying out to you in fear, we sleep curled beside you in peace.

## Do You See What I See? The Candle Parable

By Rachel Sisk

One thing I love about Jesus's parables is that we can interpret them in so many ways. I found myself reading Luke 8:16-18 as a stand-alone passage and began scratching my head thinking, "well that could mean a lot of different things." When I read through verse 16, I initially thought that the candle was symbolic of our faith in Christ and that we must display it so all can see. But as I began reading verses 17 & 18, I became puzzled of how the three verses seem to fit together.

I was talking to my husband about this and how I didn't know how I was going to create a concise statement. He looked at me and asked, "Did you look at the full context?" With his suggestion I read all of Luke 8. A lightbulb clicked; perhaps when we read both parables together, we can see a bigger picture of how their messages relate and see that both parables are about involving God in our lives.

Perhaps the candle is also the Word of God and how we should let it shine in our life. When I read the next verse, I see it as a declaration that God knows all and nothing that we do goes unknown by him; therefore, we should strive to have a pure spirit. When we strive to have a pure heart and to do God's will, we will produce good fruits which in turn will help us be faithful servants of the Lord. I encourage you today to ponder on what Luke 8:16-18 means to you. It's beautiful how the Word of God can speak to us in so many ways.

### ***Prayer for Today:***

Lord, today let us shine to the world in need. Teach us to be pure in heart that we may prosper and produce fruit that will carry on your vision. Help us to turn our eyes to you and keep the candle burning brightly and boldly.

## Holy Tension

*By Renee Edington*

When Jesus says he has no place to lay his head, he isn't complaining. In fact, it's not a statement about his personal comfort at all. He's making a point about the cost of following him. Fully following Jesus was and is a radical move. There is comfort and beauty in a relationship with Christ AND there's hardship in following him. Do you hear that tension? Jesus wants followers and he wants those followers to understand the price. It will be uncomfortable. It will be challenging. It won't be easy. And it will be liberating.

Five years ago, I heard a call from Jesus. "You're going to seminary." I didn't know why or what I would do with the degree. I did the easiest and the hardest thing I have ever done. I followed the call. I followed Jesus. It's important for followers of Jesus to understand the complicated tension of a life of serving God. It's beautiful and it's scary. During the past five years, I have tackled challenges I spent years avoiding. I didn't run from them this time. The difference was I had Jesus. My relationship with him strengthened with every terrifying obstacle I met. Everyone's obstacles are different. Mine were public speaking, preaching, research, writing, digging into the Bible, and setting boundaries in just about every area of my life.

A relationship with Jesus isn't magical. It's not a fairy tale. It is real and gritty and messy. It's also the best thing I have ever done. Jesus is here. Everywhere. Jesus is with us every minute. There is strength and power in a relationship with Jesus. All we must do is acknowledge him, accept his love and follow where he leads. There's that tension again—accepting Jesus is the hardest and easiest thing you'll ever do. It's worth it.

### ***Prayer for Today:***

Creator God, you sent your son to earth. Fully divine and fully human, Jesus lived on earth and knew our struggles. Thank you. Help us to fully follow Jesus. Help us to make the easiest and hardest of decisions. Help us to embrace that tension that is filled with joy. Amen.

## Jesus Called Me?

*By Matt Middlebrooks*

It's a short story. Not much different in any of the Gospels. There's no miracle that causes Matthew to believe. Just Jesus walking along a street, noticing a man no one else would really acknowledge, and inviting him to follow. And then they go to dinner. Fitting that this is my namesake. I didn't have a blinding light experience that led me to follow Jesus. Honestly, I can't tell you a lot of the details of when it happened. I was blessed to grow up in a family and churches that loved me and I don't remember a time without that in my life.

But I look back and see a slowly deepening impact of Jesus. It happened in fits and starts. And there were certainly things that I did that I'm not proud of, despite being a follower of Jesus. But there were also moments of clarity and insight where I believe Jesus expanded my heart.

Did Matthew ever wonder why he was invited to follow? I certainly wonder that sometimes. Oh, I know I have gifts and talents, but I'm not a great follower. I like to lead. I like to have all the answers. I think I know the best way. Why would Jesus invite me?

That's when I see the Pharisees' question during dinner. "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" And it occurs to me, if He didn't eat with sinners, He would eat alone. Why would He invite me? Well, if He only invited perfect people, He wouldn't have any followers.

Then I have to ask myself, who am I suggesting should be outside the circle? In my arrogance, who would I exclude from being invited? That's my journey following Jesus. Paying attention to the ways He wants to keep expanding my heart for others.

### ***Prayer for Today:***

Dear God. Thank you for inviting me to follow You. Thank you for noticing me along the way. Thank you for looking past my faults. Keep teaching me to be a better follower. Show me how I can notice others along the way and invite them to follow You. Amen.



## A Rule of Rest

*By Janie Powell*

Mark's gospel is characterized by a real sense of urgency. In our passage today, even the disciples' need for rest feels urgent. After a whirlwind of activity, Jesus calls them to come to a quiet place to get some rest. But – it looks like their plans for rest were thwarted by the ever-increasing masses who were desperate to get to Jesus. So, the text makes it sound like they picked up those tired, dusty feet – and kept working (at least for a while).

Let's put ourselves in the position of the disciples: When have you been so tired from doing important, urgent work, only to uncover more important, urgent work that needs to be done? How did this make you feel? What were your reasons to keep working? Did you recognize that you needed rest? How does true rest happen?

Now, let's put ourselves in the position of the crowd: When have you felt like a sheep without a shepherd? When have you been so desperate for God that you'd be willing to run ahead of the boat just to get a glimpse of him?

Sometimes we know we need a break and we just can't get one. Even Jesus faced this dilemma. But, often even when we can rest, we choose not to. In this story, Jesus and the disciples intended to rest, but they had to change their plans. Throughout the gospels, it seems that Jesus practiced resting as a rule, but allowed some room for exceptions.

In our reality, sometimes it seems like work is the rule, and we only get to rest when there is room, or "an exception." The message that we are to be constantly "on," constantly working (even if it is for a higher purpose) is from the world, not from God. Sometimes the urge to go, go, go, is a sign that we are behaving like sheep without a shepherd. We aim to serve, to do good, but when we consistently ignore the call to rest, who are we serving?

Cont'd —>

## A Rule of Rest

*By Janie Powell*

I've noticed in my own spiritual practice, that when I am intentionally seeking God's guidance to understand my own motivations, then I find it easier to distinguish between being motivated by compassion to make an exception to my rule of rest. Our practice of the Way of Christ is not a magic spell or a transaction. Instead, we are invited to dance with a partner who knows us, loves us, and invites us to dance in the ebbs and flows of life. God has room for both our work and our rest.

### ***Prayer for Today:***

Eternal, Loving God: thank you for being big enough and loving enough to have room for our rest. Help us know how to make rest a rule in our lives, and model that for those in our care, so that we all have the energy to keep dancing. Amen.

## Defeat?

*By Jan Hill*

What can women do in missions? Maybe more than they think when they first arrive on their assigned mission field, confronted by a foreign language and cultural adjustments.

After living in one southeastern Asian country for 25 years we were assigned to a nearby country. Once again I was the “new missionary on the block” trying to assimilate into new ways of living.

I joined a prayer group of women missionaries who quickly befriended and encouraged me. We stood in a circle with clasped hands and I felt I had become one with them until I noticed I was the only one wearing shoes!

It takes some of us a while to catch on and catch up but God in His mercy loves us anyway and uses us for his glory. “...how beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news” (Romans 10:15).

### ***Prayer for Today:***

When Shall I praise Thee, Lord?

When the fruit of our labor brings new believers into Your kingdom,  
When the good news produces churches and throngs of people to  
Worship together;

When my own family gathers to worship-  
That is when I shall praise thee, Lord.

But when a year's labor fails  
And church members leave the fold,  
And my own nest is empty-  
“Yet will I exult in the Lord.  
I will rejoice in the God of my salvation  
For He is my strength.”

When shall I praise thee, Lord?  
In victory and defeat;  
In joy and despair;  
Forever.

## Follow Me

*By Hannah Moody*

Following Jesus. It can be easier said than done, especially when it comes to our everyday lives. We get used to our routines and schedules. Ball practice on Mondays. Church on Wednesdays. Book Club on Thursdays. And so forth. Having routines can be healthy. Losing yourself in them is not, as we can get too comfortable. Scripture reminds us of the call to deny ourselves. Another easier said than done feat. To be honest, neither one of these are easy for me. I live by a routine, I get used to that routine, and it's hard to break it. Then, there's the indulgent tendencies. A little Starbucks here and there. A Target run. Basketball tickets. Where's my self-denial? We tend to want more, both as a society and as individuals. What fills us? What occupies our hearts and minds so much that we forget about the Gospel? The true meaning of the call — to give oneself. Thinking of others. Giving to others. Sacrificing ourselves just as Jesus did for us. For the sake of our Creator and the Gospel. We sometimes forget about having the faith to know that God is bigger, especially with Christ's crucifixion.

Faith isn't comfortable, nor is it supposed to be. Jesus wasn't comfortable on the cross. He was tempted but then remembered His purpose. Do we remember our purpose? Taking up our cross is self-denial and self-surrender. So let us pick up our cross and follow Jesus. It can be heavy, but oh so worth it.

### ***Prayer for Today:***

Gracious God, thank you for your Son. Open our hearts and our minds to experience the call. Denying ourselves, taking up our crosses, following Jesus, and remembering your purpose for each of us. During this Lenten Season, let our lives be filled with your grace, love, and mercy as we surrender to you. Amen.

## Loving Our Neighbors

*By Jerry Hayes*

Prayerfully considering today's passage, I must first determine, who is my neighbor? As I read, my neighbor is anyone who is in need, regardless of race, creed, color, or social background. Love means acting to meet the needs of our neighbors, and we have neighbors all around us. What is the definition of need? A need is something we lack, perhaps something required for survival such as food, water, shelter, clothing, or sleep. A need could also be something we must have to survive in other ways such as access to healthcare, community and belonging, or love and connection.

These verses in Matthew 25:37-40 help us understand the needs our neighbors might have and our responsibility to help meet those needs. "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes, and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you? The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'"

In today's passage, the lawyer asked Jesus, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus answered, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" And this command comes with a promise- "Do this and you will live."

So how might one go about loving their neighbor as themselves? Do we not provide for ourselves so we are not hungry or thirsty? Do we not clothe ourselves so we are not naked? Do we not meet our own basic needs? Perhaps, this is a call to be more aware of those around us who are in need and to be more sensitive to the Holy Spirit's voice in our lives, moving us to action. This might look like volunteer service, donating items, providing financial resources, offering prayer, or being a voice and advocate for those who cannot speak for themselves. According to Jesus, this is what brings us life, our faith moved to action.

### ***Prayer for Today:***

Lord open my eyes to those around me who have needs I might be able meet, through my time or other resources. Teach me to be intentional about seeking to be a good neighbor by loving others and giving of myself. May I follow your example of loving sacrificially. Amen.



## Staying Humble

*By Dan Carman*

In our prayers, we offer thanksgiving. Isn't it good and proper to express our appreciation to God for our blessings? In times of abundance, we may be led, naturally, to thank God for what he has allowed for us. But how quickly can we associate our blessings with our own righteousness! We may be inclined to pray, "Lord, I thank you that I am not like other people who do not have good relationships, a clean record, a safe place to live, plenty of food to eat, wealth stored away . . . because of their sinful ways, their mistakes, them not heeding your word, they have really screwed up their lives – and thank you so much, Lord, for not letting me be like them."

But Jesus's own words tell us that this is not how we should pray. When we try to live as faithful Christians – going to church, giving a tithe, acting in accordance with polite society's rules – we can start believing that we are good at it. And if we're not careful, we can start acting like we're good at it. If the lesson of the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (the latter in a position of despised thief and corrupt traitor) is to be summarized, it could be this: humble yourself. A simple reminder each day – that each of us is an egregious sinner and needs desperately the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ – may be to look down at your heart, examine it, and pray this simple yet profound prayer.

### ***Prayer for Today:***

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

## The Cost of Leadership

*By Tolu Oladele*

Many times, I am just like the disciples of Jesus who thought that leadership was being in a place of prominence. I sometimes think that leadership is an opportunity to show off my talents and skills, overlooking the true meaning of what it means to lead in God's kingdom. Also, I find myself getting upset when leadership is not as easy as I thought it would be. My character flaws and those of others make it a very bumpy ride.

James and John's desire and ask, to sit on the right hand and left hand of Jesus Christ in his glory, typified a misunderstanding that leadership in the kingdom should be that of privileges. The other apostles were jealous, overhearing the conversation. None of them were fully aware of the cost of being a leader in God's kingdom. I wonder if James and John understood the weight of what they said they were willing to do. I guess that if they knew Jesus would be crucified to death, their immediate response would not be a 'yes,' to drinking of the same cup as Jesus.

To set our understanding of kingdom leadership right, Jesus corrected the apostles saying "The Son of Man came not to be ministered to, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." As I think upon Jesus's words, I am compelled to see leadership in God's kingdom differently. It is a call to a deeper level of surrender to the Holy Spirit, a cost to my flesh, my pride and ego, and a call to put others first rather than myself, a call to serve and not a call to privileges.

### ***Prayer for Today:***

O Lord, help me to understand that leadership in your kingdom is a call to sacrifice, a call to serve others and an opportunity to allow the Holy Spirit reflect Christ more in me.



Tiwa Kolawole, 6th grade

Matthew 14:13-21  
Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand

## Compassion and Care

*By John Lambert*

Although we have many miracles in our lives each day, compassion and caring for one another is key to a life well spent. Jesus was a caring and compassionate guide as to how we should live here on this earthly plane. As Jesus prayed to his father for his strength and guidance, we should also be praying for those gifts.

As we recognize the needs of those around us, whether family, friend, or stranger, let us be like Jesus and feel their pain and suffering in order to provide for their immediate needs. In this passage Jesus provided sustenance and we too have opportunities to do likewise. By providing a meal or through comfort in listening to their story we help them by showing we care and they are not alone. Being there for someone when they are hurting is our way of emulating Jesus's compassion and care for all mankind. This not only helps those who seek our help but it provides our path to the everlasting Kingdom. Where we rejoin Jesus in our new flesh for ever and ever.

### ***Prayer for Today:***

Heavenly Father, thank you for all the blessings we enjoy. The very thought of everlasting life in your presence lifts our spirit on high. Let us be the example to others by showing them compassion and to care for their needs, just as Jesus does for all who believe. Amen.





## Still Standing

*By Samantha Todd*

When I first read my assigned passage, I must confess I struggled with its content. You see, my dad is blind from glaucoma, and I have watched the impact of vision loss on his mind, body and spirit. As a healthcare professional, I have seen the ravages of many disease processes on the human body. I thought to myself: how many times have I and others cried out to God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit to heal family and friends, with no seeming acknowledgement from the Trinity, or healing of the physical body. What was it about Bartimaeus's cry that captured Jesus's attention, while my own pleas go seemingly unanswered? As I reread, prayed, meditated and studied this passage, I came to understand that the physical healing of Bartimaeus is the least important aspect of this scripture.

As always, Jesus is surrounded by a crowd of his followers and local town folk hoping to catch a glimpse of him. Despite the noise and lack of personal space, Jesus heard Bartimaeus's cry and verse 49 tells us that Jesus stood still. Jesus stood still! People in the crowd trying to silence Bartimaeus? Doesn't matter. Jesus doesn't operate on any level of human understanding, thank goodness. For me, therein lies the hope for all types of healing: physical, spiritual and mental. Jesus is standing still.

What an incredible blessing for me and you, that our Savior stands still every time we call His name! Our paths may be crooked, our hearts overwhelmed, our feet dusty with worries of this world, but Jesus hears us and loves us. Praise be to God!

### ***Prayer for Today:***

Heavenly Father, thank you for loving us enough to send Your Son to walk with us, and die for us. We aren't righteous enough to call Your name, but You have reconciled us all to You through Jesus's death on the cross. And through Jesus's life and death, we are blessed to have a God who stands still every time we call Your name. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

## Familiarity Breeds Blindness

*By Brad Scroggin*

In the mundane routines of life, familiarity can blind us to the extraordinary. Matthew 13:53-58 unveils a community accustomed to Jesus's presence but unable to fathom the depth of his wisdom. Like them, we risk underestimating the transformative power within the everyday. It's a reminder to break free from the chains of routine and perceive the divine even in the seemingly ordinary moments. What marvels might unfold if we approach our daily lives with fresh eyes, recognizing the potential in the routine?

### ***Prayer for Today:***

Lord, open our eyes to the extraordinary in the ordinary, that we may not become blind to the wonders of your presence in our daily lives. Grant us the humility to see beyond familiarity and embrace the profound in simplicity.

## Teach Like Jesus

*By Rebekah Epps*

Many years ago when I first began my teaching career, I was like many frustrated rookies. I wanted to be able to inspire even the neediest, stubborn, and most misbehaving children into learning for the sheer joy of learning. As you can see, I had spent way too much time watching and being influenced by Hollywood movies like *Stand and Deliver*, *Mr. Holland's Opus*, and *Freedom Writers*. After a particularly rough day, my principal stopped to remind me that my students' moms were sending me the best children they had to be educated. They weren't keeping their honor roll students at home for someone else to teach. They were sending me the best they had, and it was up to us to welcome them all. My principal prayed with me and then reminded me to "teach like Jesus" as she walked away.

In this passage the disciples were arguing over who was the greatest and would be most favored when Jesus establishes His kingdom. Jesus uses a child to remind His disciples that we are to welcome even those who can do nothing for us, but are the most vulnerable and least powerful. It is best to receive and welcome those who can do the least for us in Jesus's name, and act as His representative by doing something Jesus would do. As we continue in this Lenten season, let us all be reminded God gives us opportunities to receive and welcome those who are the least powerful seeking His kingdom. It is up to us to welcome them and serve Him by teaching like Jesus.

### ***Prayer for Today:***

Let us all be open and willing to follow the teachings of Jesus as we prepare our hearts during this Lenten season. Let us be willing to receive and welcome the neediest, loneliest, least powerful, and most vulnerable by sharing His message through love and compassion.

## Let's Not Get Distracted!

*By Linda Wilson*

God always speaks to me when I need it. It's so laughable to me that this is the passage that I was given to reflect on because it is one that I can so relate to. First off, I have always been like Martha running around like a chicken with my head cut off trying to get everything done. I have never thought it was fair when one person does all the work and I don't mind saying so. Those who know me know that I'm always on the go. For holidays, I've always wanted my house to look like something out of *Better Homes and Gardens* and my food to be like Betty Crocker. It never happens but not from lack of trying. So, I can imagine how irritated Martha was that she had been preparing and working herself to death getting ready for the guest while Mary just sat and talked to Jesus. I don't blame her in the least for talking to the Lord about how Mary had made her mad. However, he immediately told Martha that she needed not be worried and upset about so many things! Mary was the one who had her priorities in order. If not, she would have missed HIM. Martha needed to be less distracted by tasks.

Oh how I need to be reminded of that often. Our lives are often busy and full. It is so easy to lose focus of Jesus in our lives. Perhaps if we took the time to sit at Jesus's feet more often, praying and listening, we might become less distracted by the tasks we feel we must complete. Slowing down and sitting might seem counterproductive to a person on the move like me, but may we all take a lesson from Mary in her desire to be focused on Christ.

### ***Prayer for Today:***

Dear Lord, help us maintain our focus on Jesus, where He is at work in and around our lives, so that we can fully experience His presence. Help us identify distractions keeping us from spending time at His feet. Amen.

## Let the Children Come to Me

*By Julia Hutchens*

Baby dedications. I 100% see Mark 10:13-16 vividly during these special occasions. This is a time when a commitment is made by the congregation and parents to grow a child up in the church with God as their number one guide. Jesus feels seen and heard when we love the children in our church and raise them up to know Him.

Children's sermons. What a Mark 10:13-16 occasion – right? I think Jesus is smiling big when children walk down the aisle to learn more about Him! They (and us big kids, too!) get to hear true accounts and see pictures or items that help make these “stories” a reality. Hopefully we'll all walk more like Jesus did. Maybe we can try to see each child through Jesus's eyes. Could it help us to remember we are God's child, too?

Christmas Project. Another Mark 10:13-16 opportunity? I think so! Our Calvary family is the hands and feet of Jesus – walking like Jesus to show love to children in need of hope and peace and we pray for them, give of our time, and offer nourishment and love! Children of all ages are welcome to help in some way to show God's love!

What other opportunities offer a Mark 10: 13-16 experience? How can you live out Mark 10: 13-16 to honor God?

### ***Prayer for Today:***

Heavenly Father, thank you for your son, Jesus. Thank you for the amazing example of how to welcome and show love and patience to all of God's children. Help us all to remember we are children in your eyes. Thank you for opportunities at Calvary that help us to be more like Jesus each day! Amen.



Adelyn Lester, 2nd grade

Mark 12:41-43  
The Widow's Offering

## A Widow's Trusting Act

*By Ken Dutch*

Jesus has a real knack for toppling our efforts to be our own savior, doesn't he? The world tells us to insulate ourselves and our loved ones from risk, that there is some dollar amount that will make us safe, and that our giving should come out of our abundance. It is a very easy trap to fall into. I grew up hearing the Puritan ethic that "God helps those who help themselves," and it seemed like a simple and obvious truth. But the example of the widow's offering stands in direct opposition to everything I thought I understood as a child. Where I would have wanted to see Jesus cheering the richest people putting in the largest sums, instead he holds up the poor widow coming with her two small measly copper coins. It took most of my adult life and a series of very humbling mission trips for me to understand that the widow's offering, though small in monetary value, was of greatest significance because it represented a complete trust in God. She gave all that she had, demonstrating her deep faith and reliance on God's provision. I resisted this message, and doubled down on my own efforts for several decades. But eventually in a small mountain church in a village in Haiti Jesus finally broke me, as I saw the widow's faith play out repeatedly in the truly sacrificial giving of rural peasant farmers. He invited me to see firsthand that true discipleship calls us to give our all, not just from our surplus, but from our poverty, trusting that God, our loving parent and the source of all good gifts will honor and multiply our sacrifices.

For me this passage is tightly linked to Matthew 6:19-21: "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Both point to the faith contradiction Jesus puts in front of us. We cannot truly live in faith without acknowledging our own vulnerability and neediness, and reaching out a hand for His leading. If we are continually focusing on doing things our own way and depending on our own effort to build fortresses around our lives, we are also going to wall off the gentle savior who wants us to walk alongside Him with the trust of the widow and the farmers.

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## A Widow's Trusting Act

*By Ken Dutch*

### ***Prayer for Today:***

Lord, we reach out to you in faith, but also with a reluctance to admit our true neediness. Help us to trust as the widow trusted, to give as the farmers give, to walk through both the mountains and valleys of our lives with the assurance of your continual presence and provision. Help us to “give our last two copper coins” in the areas of our lives where we have not fully let you in, by sacrificially giving with our time and talents, our patience and listening, our prayer and the private meditations. We ask all this in thankfulness for your giving.

## Seeing the Way

*By Walter Morris*

While on the way to Jerusalem to give up his life for us Jesus passed by two blind men. They called out for him to have mercy on them. When He asked what they wanted, they said “We want to see!” Isn’t that what we all want? To see the beginning; to see the end; and everything in between?

Warren Buffet’s partner, Charlie Munger, is said to have once remarked that he wanted to know where he was going to die so that he would never go there. Evidently, he never figured out where that place was because he recently passed at the age of 99. But his quip brings a smile because we’d all love a simple way out of the inevitable. If only we could see it.

The blind men calling out to Jesus believed He could work miracles. They believed he was divine, the Son of God. And because they believed, their sight was restored so they could follow Him, not just on his journey to Jerusalem but on His path for their lives. Their faith allowed them to understand what they were to do in this life and what awaited them in the next. Maybe not in its exact details but in the essence of things.

All we need in order to see where we need to go and what we need to do is to have faith that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and to love Him with all our heart and strength and to love our neighbors as ourselves. It really is simple after all. With that faith and those two guideposts we have the direction for our lives, the secret to living a life on this earth of purpose and meaning. And unlike Mr. Munger we need not worry about stumbling by accident into the place where we will die because we know that there, in that place, we will be in heaven with Jesus for eternity.

### ***Prayer for Today:***

Dear God, thank you for loving us, providing for us and showing us the way. May we never forget that your abiding presence, the Holy spirit, is with us always. Forgive us when we are sometimes overwhelmed by the chaos and tragedy all around us and doubt that You are in charge. Help us to have the faith that will enable us to see that your Son can work miracles, in fact, the greatest miracle of all – shining light on the path that will lead to righteousness in this life and salvation in the next. Amen.

## Righteous Anger

By Lee Todd

When is anger righteous? When Jesus saw the temple being misused it triggered an angry response. His anger was not only felt by those who were expelled from the temple, but also by His followers who seldom saw Him show this emotion. In my reading of scripture, I find Jesus only showing anger a handful of times during his ministry. In each case, he demonstrated “righteous anger” based on his love for something or someone being mistreated.

In my career, I very seldom showed anger, however one occasion stands out. While President of UK, we were working with an institution that wanted to offer a four-year engineering degree but with a very minimal number of faculty. UK offered to provide enough classes via video for a four-year degree. The other institution was very uncooperative. A meeting was held with their president, faculty from each institution and the president of the Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE). Their faculty member, sitting across the table from me, argued that he was an expert on “project based” engineering. He reached into his briefcase and pulled out a 6-inch stack of articles he had written and literally slammed it down in front of me. I immediately picked up the stack and threw it over my head – papers went everywhere! I then told him, and his president, that arrogance was the primary reason our faculty was fed up with working with them. Later, walking to the parking garage, I was concerned about my angry outburst. I said to the CPE president, “I really blew it in there.” He immediately said, “I loved it!” My engineering dean added that he wished his faculty could have seen it! Upon reflection, I do feel that I demonstrated “righteous anger” in that I acted out of respect for our faculty that had been putting up with the arrogant behavior for too long.

### ***Prayer for Today:***

Dear God, thank you for giving us emotions such as love, compassion, empathy and even anger. Help us to understand the difference between destructive, ego-driven anger and righteous anger. Give us the strength to minimize the former and only employ the latter for the benefit of others.

## Giving Your Best

*By Bob Baker*

In today's text, an anonymous woman does an astonishing thing. She breaks an alabaster jar of expensive, imported oil and uses all of it to anoint the head of Jesus while He is dining in the home of Simon the Leper. Here's what is so astonishing: a woman breaks protocol by going to the table traditionally reserved for men. And Jesus blesses her intrusion!

Furthermore, she does not use just a small amount of the oil in the anointing (a gesture often used to welcome guests). Rather, she pours the entire contents of the jar on Jesus's head. Such a lavish amount would customarily be reserved to anoint the body of someone who had died - to prepare the deceased's body for burial.

Immediately, the woman is criticized. "How wasteful! That much oil could have been sold for the equivalent of a year's wages. The proceeds from the sale could have helped the poor." What was she thinking?

She was thinking that she loved Jesus and desired to give Him the "best" gift that she could give. (Or as Jesus declared: "She has done what she could.") Did she perceive that Jesus was the Messiah? Did her extravagant anointing in some way signify that Jesus was on His way to offer up His life for the world?

Perhaps perceiving that Jesus was about to give His very best for her, she desired to give her very best to Jesus.

What would it mean for you to give Jesus an extravagant gift during this Lenten Season? Visiting a nursing home? Writing a note to someone who is lonely? Inviting a friend to a church service? Giving an "over and above" financial offering? Encouraging someone who is going through a difficult time? What could you give to Jesus that represents "your best"?

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## Giving Your Best

*By Bob Baker*

There is an old hymn that has been reverberating in my mind as I have reflected on this Lenten text and this Mark 14 anonymous lady. The words of this 1912 Salathiel Cleaver Kirk are as follows:

Hear ye the Master's call, "Give Me thy best!"

For, be it great or small, that is His test.

Do then the best you can, not for reward,

Not for the praise of men, but for the Lord.

Every work for Jesus will be blest,

But He asks from everyone his best.

Our talents may be few, these may be small,

But unto Him is due our best, our all.

### ***Prayer for Today:***

Generous, Loving, Gift-Giving God, Thank you for giving us your very best. Thank you for your Son, Christ Jesus, who gave His life so that we might live. This Lenten Season may we be about the task of giving "our best" to Jesus. AMEN.



Lillian Beiting, 12th grade

*John 13:1-11*  
Jesus Washes His Disciples' Feet

## To Walk With Jesus

*By Treasure Oladeji, 11th grade*

In verse 8 of today's passage, Jesus tells Peter that "unless I wash you, you have no part with me." To walk with Jesus is one of the greatest honors as a Christian but to do this, we have to prepare. One of the ways we can do this is by letting God come into our lives to cleanse us. In this season of Lent, we have to remember that Jesus died and rose so that our sins could be washed away. This is one of the first steps to walking with Jesus. I say one of the first because we first have to prepare our minds to accept Jesus into our lives so we can follow him. Baptism signifies the washing away of our sins and our old selves which gives way to the new person we become.

Washing things makes them clean. For example, we all love wearing clean clothes. We love having clean dishes so we can eat. We also love having a clean space where we can work, just as Jesus loves a clean vessel where He can showcase his glory in life. So to be that vessel, we have to be clean. This way His glory can shine through us, through our lives. This sets the foundation for being an exemplary follower of Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" - NIV.

### ***Prayer for Today:***

Dear God, thank You for sending Your son to earth so we can be saved. We ask that You wash us clean so that we can be shining lights to the world and You will be glorified. Touch our hearts so that we can prepare to be Your followers and spread Your word everywhere we go. Amen.



## As I Have Loved You

*By Rebecca C. Miller*

Have you ever encountered someone that you just don't get along with, much less love?

I am a people person, easily making conversation and friends, but I still manage to find a few people I just don't like. Whether it be a personality conflict, a result of having nothing in common with that person, or a reaction to the way they treated me, some people rub me the wrong way. Others just make it difficult to love them.

I've found the key to loving people is to focus on the other person instead of myself. As I reflect on what today's scripture passage from John 13 really means, it sounds easy to love, but is rarely ever done. It's easier to accept someone than to actually love them, but acceptance and love are not the same thing. Acceptance is tolerance. Love involves empathy, caring action, and a commitment to the relationship with others.

One of the things I most admired about my late husband J. D. Miller, M.D. was that no matter the situation for patient care, whether in the clinic exam room, the emergency room, at Mission Health Lexington, or in a mission field clinic in Haiti, when he encountered a patient for medical care, he gave his full attention to the concerns of the patient, seeking to make that person whole again. He did this because, as a Christian, he saw value in each person and sought to show the type of love Jesus expressed toward everyone he encountered. J. D. felt caring for and viewing his patients in this way was how he shared the Gospel of Christ and love for his fellow man.

### ***Prayer for Today:***

Lord, forgive me when I fail to act in a manner that shows love toward others. Give me the awareness of those I encounter who need to be loved and the capacity not only to accept, but to love others in the same sacrificial way Jesus loves all of us. Amen.

## Do Not Doubt Me

By Missy Pruner

*Do not doubt me.*

That was the repeated message that our Lucy heard (OUT LOUD ) during her two year battle with Lymphoma. Those four words came to be what got us through the tireless days and nights of uncertainty. I'm sure Jesus's words in this passage got his Disciples through their uncertain days, as well.

Today's passage tells us to not let our hearts be troubled and to trust in God.

*Do not doubt me.*

Jesus comforts his Disciples by telling them he is preparing many rooms for them in Heaven. I have noted in my Bible that the word "room" is only listed twice in the Bible. The second occurrence is verse 23 as "home."

How comforting is it that Jesus has already prepared a room for us?

On this side of Heaven, we will never understand why bad things happen to good people but this scripture reminds us that it's all going to be ok.

*Do not doubt me.*

Unfortunately, Lucy had an immediate recurrence following her first round of chemotherapy and radiation for Lymphoma and was facing a stem cell transplant back in late summer of 2022 in Salt Lake City. She told me one day, "Mom it's going to be okay. Even if it's not ok, it will still be okay." What wonderful faith in God that our strong Lucy had and continues to have each day. Lucy knew Jesus had prepared her room and she never doubted him to heal her and we shouldn't either.

*Do not doubt me.*

### ***Prayer for Today:***

Lord, may we always have the faith to believe and trust in your word, especially on the days that hold uncertainty and those days when it's the hardest. We thank you that you have prepared our Heavenly home. May others see Jesus in us until we make it home.

## You Are Somebody

*By Leona Power*

Early in my professional career, I had the honor and privilege to serve in a presidential administration in Washington, DC. I held a couple of senior policy positions at the U.S. Department of the Interior. A close friend served in comparable positions at a different agency.

After our service in DC was finished, my friend continued her work in the same policy area in which she had been involved in Washington. She continued to receive invitations to speak to industry and public interest groups interested in these issues.

One day she told me that she started her speeches by saying, "I used to be Somebody." This was obviously in reference to the fact that she no longer held a position from which she could shape public policy. Her humorous self-deprecation was clever and usually drew the anticipated laughter.

While her statement was made in jest, at that moment, my friend was measuring her value in terms of worldly accomplishments and achievements. She had essentially said, "I'm nobody because I don't have that position."

Our scripture passage for today assures us God values us differently. As Christians and followers of Jesus Christ, each of us is a special **SOMEBODY** in the eyes of God because He chose us. He chose us because He loves us – not because of anything we did.

Just as the Father chose Jesus to die on the cross as atonement for our sins, He chose us to continue His work. As **SOMEBODY** who was intentionally chosen by God, we are given a mission – "to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last." My friend and I were toiling in the trenches of public political policy – very trivial when compared to the work we are called to do for God.

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## **You Are Somebody**

*By Leona Powers*

Rather, we are to live our lives in a way that reflects the boundless love and mercy God has graciously given to us. We should share what God has done for us. A positive, encouraging word from you may be all it takes to help another person know the goodness and mercy of our Lord. We are called to be intentional and untiring in spreading the temporal and spiritual blessings of the Gospel. Let us pray for the strength and courage to complete the mission.

### ***Prayer for Today:***

Dear God, on those days when I wake up feeling pretty worthless, please remind me that I am Somebody because you chose me. Please give me the strength and courage to fulfill your calling for me – the bearing of lasting fruit in your name. Amen.

## The Greatest Prayer Ever Prayed

*By David Carpenter*

“Our Father who art in Heaven...” is known as the Lord’s Prayer, however it is interesting that Jesus never prayed this prayer. This prayer contains confession of debts and sins that He did not have, this prayer He gave to His disciples to instruct them in the manner of prayer.

The prayer we read in John 17 is the prayer we can actually call, The Lord’s Prayer, because this is a prayer He actually prayed for Himself.

Jesus starts this powerful prayer with, “Father, the hour has come.” What “hour” is Jesus referring to? It is the hour the world had been waiting for since sin had entered mankind with Adam and Eve. Jesus is talking about the appointed time of His death, the ultimate sacrifice for sin. The hour had come for Jesus to finally conquer the enslavement of sin over His people. The time had come for God to finally be united with his people. The time had finally come for the creator to be united with His creation.

### ***Prayer for Today:***

Jesus, thank you for teaching us how to pray, how to be in communion with you. Thank you for the sacrifice that allows us to have a personal loving relationship with you. Amen.

## Remain and Watch

*By Eric Frugé*

Jesus was confronting the unthinkable, the impending horror of what we now call his Passion: Bloody, prolonged, excruciating pain. Ridicule. His suffering and death celebrated with mockery. The dread was so agonizing that Jesus prayed, "If there is any other way..." Mark leads us to the garden and demands that we behold Christ's agony. The cross is still hours away, but already the barbarism and weight of the world's sin is crushing him. "My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death."

Jesus grieved because he was as human as we are. We don't feel it proper to think of Jesus that way, but it's the very truth Mark wants us to understand. The cross was terrifying, and Jesus in his humanity felt its terror just as we would.

"Remain here and keep watch." In those final dark hours Jesus needed his friends to comfort him. They'd been at his side for three years and seen mind-blowing miracles. Perhaps they had similar thoughts as many today. He's the Messiah. What's to be afraid of? Obviously, they weren't overly concerned. They fell asleep.

That last tender request Jesus made to his disciples before his death still echoes loud in our day. His words are destined for all who follow in his path. For whom do we watch? We watch for those who need our compassion- people who grieve, those wrestling with hopelessness, irreversible loss, and heartbreak. Jesus invites us to remain and be a friend to them also.

### ***Prayer for Today:***

Dear Lord, sometimes I sleep through the desperation of people. Give me the grace to remain faithful, vigilant and care deeply. Oh! Divine Comforter of my heart and soul, make me a comforter, too.

## Competing Interests

*By Adeyimika Desmennu*

Making life choices can be hard, especially when related to matters of our faith and commitment to God.

As children of God, our call to follow Jesus, work for Him, and commit to Him meets many other programs, commitments, expectations, and tests in our lives. These may be equally important and controversial and could put us at a crossroads with decision-making like it was with Pontius Pilate while deciding the judgment for Jesus Christ, what was referred to as “History’s Greatest Miscarriage of Justice.”

In as much as we are in this world, we will continue to wrestle with competing interests when making decisions. Giving our lives to and following Jesus will continue to put us out to face faith-challenging circumstances – standing up for the faith that we profess in God or compromising to accept the offers around us spiritually, socially, politically, economically, etc. The call that we have is to leave all and follow Christ (Matthew 16:24) and be an example of a believer. As we make decisions, we can be sure of the leading of the Holy Spirit to guide us to respond according to the will of God rightfully; a willingness to obey the Lord is one important step in the right direction (Is 61:1, Ps 147:3). Will this be easy? Definitely not!

The life call that we have will indeed make our feet dusty. He promised never to leave or forsake us as we continue to choose Him, and when we get “dirty,” we can rest assured that He is always there.

Shalom!

### ***Prayer for Today:***

Our dear heavenly Father, we pray today for reassurance that you are always and will continue to be with us when life situations present us with tough decisions. We pray that you will guide our hearts to always stand for you. In Jesus Christ’s name we pray. Amen!



## Triumph to Tragedy

*By M.A. and Portia Winchester*

The most holy celebration of the year started with a triumphal procession from the fields of Bethlehem to the temple in Jerusalem. The priests escorting their perfect lamb, chosen without fault, is the central focus of that morning. God's perfect Lamb, chosen from the beginning, Jesus, entered that event and received the welcome due their promised one. That day which started out with such hope slowly over the next few days changed to days which were filled with sadness, sorrow, suffering and darkness. Faced with such changing circumstances, from triumph to tragedy, how was Jesus able to keep on "trucking?" Jesus with the cross before Him committed himself into the care of His father.

How about us when our days of joy and celebration are slowly or even suddenly turned into times of sadness, sorrow, suffering, and darkness? How do we keep on "trucking?" The wise ones over the ages have dealt with these problems and issues, books have been written, and yet no easy solutions have been found for these situations of life. Certainly they are correct with their recommendation to seek the best help that is available. But time and fate happen to us all. The bottom line is not when all else fails to trust in God as a last resort, but to live our lives daily in such a way that the faithful friend who has been with all the good days of our lives will also be with us during those times of sadness, sorrow, suffering, and darkness.

### ***Prayer for Today:***

Lord, may we acknowledge your presence in our lives on the days when life seems easy, on those days when life seems harsh and difficult, and all the days in between. Remind us we can trust you because you are faithful to meet our needs and to care for us. And when peace in this life seems fleeting, may we be reminded that you offer a peace which surpasses all understanding. Amen.

## An Alternate Reckoning

By Ryan Voogt

There was a buzz in the air: Jesus's followers, as they neared Jerusalem, thought God's kingdom was about to break out (19:11). They spread cloaks, waved branches, and shouted things like "Hosanna" (Save us!) and "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!" It's recorded in each of the Gospels, so it was clearly a big moment.

Although we typically lack this revolutionary zeal, we also worship and declare the praise of the already-among-us, but yet-to-come-in-full King. But Jesus warns us about these ardent feelings—however genuine they feel—for what they might conceal. In the preceding parable, Jesus tells how (all?!) the servants of a future king "hated him" and begged that he "not be made king over us (19:14)." Interestingly, a couple servants decided to do the future king's bidding anyway, perhaps just in case, but not out of love. The servant who did not do his bidding explained that he did not because he judged this king and resented his ways.

This parable cautions us to pay attention to what lies deep within, even amid our shouts and singing. The disciples hailing Jesus as King did so in anticipation of a reckoning—against their enemies, the ones they thought ruined their world, but not a reckoning within themselves, like what happened with the servants (vv 15-20). Did Jesus come to Jerusalem and slay his enemies? No, he cleared out the temple with its mixed agenda—like my own. I also harbor resentment and wish for an end to my miseries but not a purifying of "my temple." Yet Jesus is right: the only reckoning that will bring peace is the kind that leads to worshiping and following in purity; the "Roman" within me needs to be cleansed. The structure needs to be (re)built on the one Cornerstone, lest the cracks and crumbling walls testify against me (Hab 2:11) and I lose sight of my need for a King *and* Savior.

### ***Prayer for Today:***

Oh Lord, show me the sin in myself, where I avoid or hide from you, so that by your mercy you may refine me. May your coming to us have you ever more enthroned, Amen.

## Forgiveness and Worship

By BJ Webb

When we think of how Jesus was tortured it should grieve us. Although it is difficult to think about, we must acknowledge our sins and the fact that Jesus suffered and died for our salvation. Each of us has failed to see Jesus as the true King and have mocked His authority which is false worship. Jesus allowed the soldiers to mock and torture Him because it was part of God's plan. This is the way Jesus is able to rescue us from our sin and shame. It is also God's plan that we worship and honor Him.

The soldiers had no respect for Him or who He claimed He was. We may not mock Jesus as King, beat Him or spit on Him, but at times we forsake Him and deny His rule. We must ask for forgiveness. The soldiers pretended to worship Jesus as King of the Jews and clothed Him in a robe, crowned Him with thorns and anointed Jesus with spit. Jesus deserves the finest robe of all, a robe of righteousness. His crown was not precious, it was thorns pressed into His head and pierced His flesh. Can you feel the pain? He received what we deserved, ensuring our forgiveness.

As we consider what Jesus endured for us, we should be overwhelmed with gratitude which should lead to worship. The sacrifice was so great and our gratitude should be great. Are you grateful? Do you worship the true King? Are you obedient to God? Do you give God the glory?

### ***Prayer for Today:***

Almighty God, thank you for the indescribable, wonderful gift of your Son, Jesus for our salvation and the promise of eternal life through His suffering, death and resurrection. Please help us to be obedient in our journey here on earth giving all the glory to You, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## Faithful Servant

*By Margaret Ann Smith*

I have heard this story of the two thieves that hung on the crosses beside Jesus a million times and the picture of the three crosses on the hill come to mind. As I reflect on the two men on either side of Jesus, the one who mocks Jesus and the one who asks to be remembered as he enters his kingdom, I think how as humans we question God and his power. These two men represent the whole world, and we are divided into two groups – sheep (believers) and goats (unbelievers). As an unbeliever it would be easy to challenge God to show his power but as believers we have learned to have faith in Jesus and in his plan. I'm not saying this road is always easy, but as "faithful servants" we are to be grateful and trust in the Lord. These two thieves were being punished for their sins, and Jesus did nothing wrong but sacrificed himself to save us from our sins to give us eternal life. There on the cross He told the second man on the cross, "I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise." And this the reassurance that He gives each of us who choose to follow Him and continue everyday as His faithful servants.

### ***Prayer for Today:***

Lord thank you for your continued love. Please provide us the power to trust in you and help us to continue to walk as your faithful servants. Thank you for the sacrifice you made for us on the cross, giving those who believe eternal life. Amen.

## Having Doubt

*By Sarah Shely*

As Christians, I think we sometimes feel like we can never doubt our faith, like we should have all the answers and stand firm in our beliefs. In this passage, however, I think it shows us that Jesus is willing to meet us right where we are. In a world full of uncertainty, Jesus is willing to meet us at our lowest moments when we have feelings of fear, pain, doubt, and confusion. He is willing to be with us, to sit with us. I remember shortly after becoming a mom, my dad told me that one of the most important things he had learned from parenthood was that you had to show up, show up for all the big and small moments, because where you invest your time, you invest your love. Just like a parent, Jesus shows up for us. He sees us when we are aching and He sits with us. He listens. He shows us His love. Even though I know the Lord's love for us is far greater, the unconditional love I have experienced as a mom is the closest earthly correlation I can imagine. I know when my boys come to me with questions or worries, I want to meet them with love and comfort, no matter what the subject may be. And I think that is exactly how Jesus feels. He wants to meet us in our places of doubt and disbelief and help us come to a greater faith in Him.

### ***Prayer for Today:***

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your promise of unconditional love, a love that is great enough to cover all our fears and worries. I pray we can rest in the everlasting comfort of your love. What a blessing. Thank you for loving us so completely and fully. We love you. Amen

# Acknowledgements

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*With Joy,*

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*Minister to College Students and Adults*

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