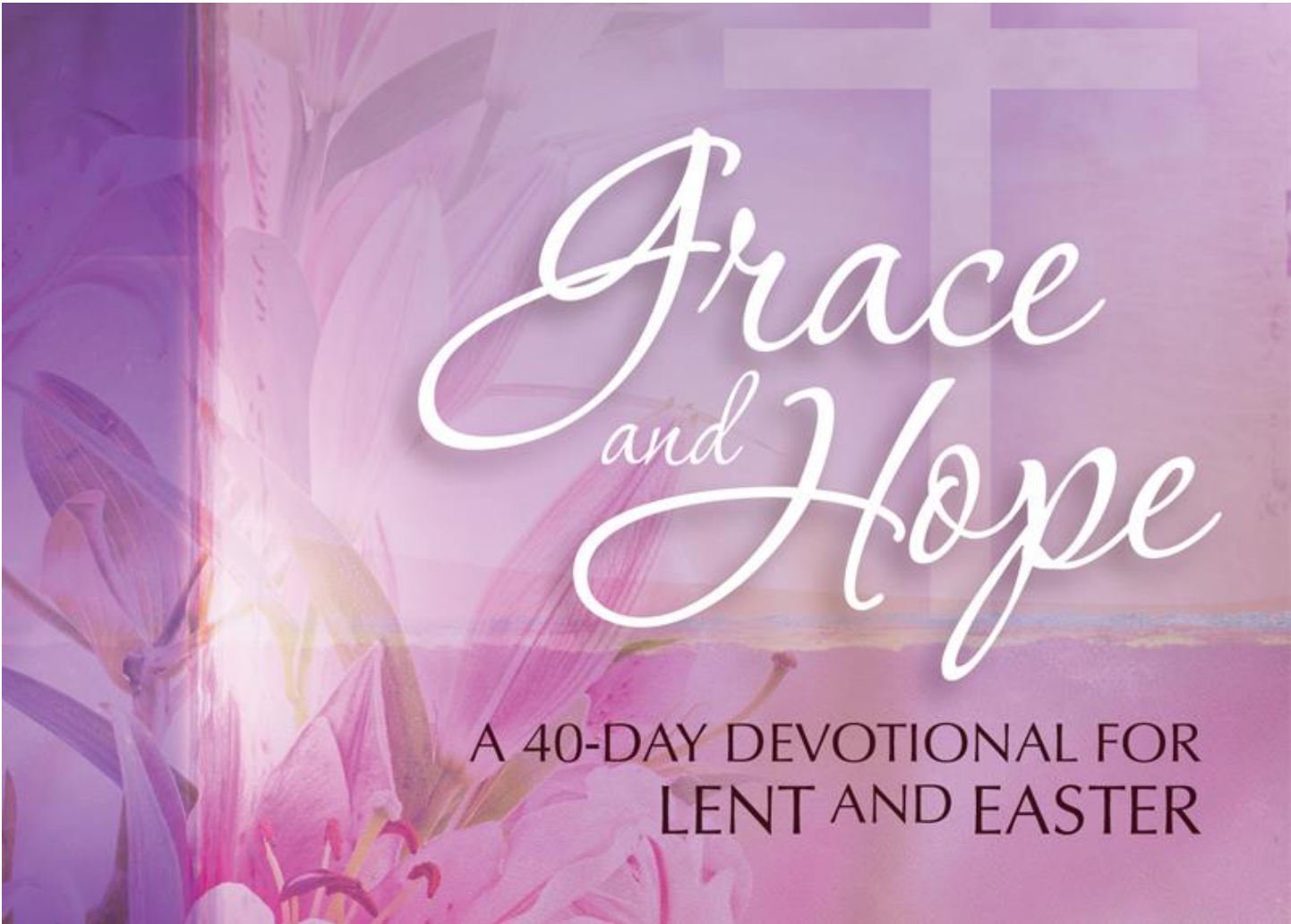


*St. Matthew AME Church
Lenten Devotional
2018*

*The Rev. Dr. Lanel D. Guyton
Pastor*



*Grace
and
Hope*

A 40-DAY DEVOTIONAL FOR
LENT AND EASTER

Message from the Pastor

To the Members and Friends of St. Matthew,

The Lenten Season is the Christian season of preparation before Resurrection Sunday. From its beginning, Ash Wednesday, the season provides us with an opportunity to reflect on the real purpose of Jesus' coming, his work, suffering, sacrifice, death, and eventual resurrection.

As we prepare for Resurrection Sunday, and the victory that it signifies, let us do so by willingly utilizing it as another opportunity to prepare... This is the perfect time, to take time out to fast, repent, diet in moderation, and exercise spiritual discipline.

To help you with this period of soul searching, we the leaders and members of St. Matthew church have prayed and devoted ourselves to preparing daily devotions for your personal periods of meditations, during the forty-day Lent Season.

"The Thoughts for the Day," as they are affectionately called, are the spiritual reflections coming from the hearts and minds of those who love Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. They are intentional; in that their sole purpose is to help you, connect spiritually, with the will of God.

At the end of each *Thought for the Day*, you will find a closing prayer of Salvation, encompassing a goal for each reader; designed to help us discover a need for personal change.

This Lenten Season, let us focus on the spiritual disciplines of engagement—submission, worship, study, service, celebration, and community. Rather than pulling back, let us merge these disciplines of faith, while anticipating that God is there, ready to meet us.

This year, invite your spouse or close acquaintance to journey with you!

God's grace,

Lanel D. Guyton

Rev. Dr. Lanel D. Guyton

Ash Wednesday

HE DID IT, ALL BECAUSE OF US!

Mark 15:31 "In the same way the chief priests, along with the scribes, were also mocking him among themselves and saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself!"

When we look at the gospel of Mark 15:31 it becomes difficult to imagine the pain and humiliation Jesus must have felt, when those who were considered his very own people unexpectedly turned on him. The story says, as Jesus made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem the people who longed for a King, cried out "Hosanna," blessed is the one who comes. Then, in a blink of an eye, those very same people who shouted in adoration turned on him, and began to call for his crucifixion.

Even Jesus, who came in spirit and human form, must have felt emotional pain at the insults that were hurled against him. The physical pain of crucifixion had to be painful, but at the same time, the mental torment he endured was probably just as painful.

However, when we look back at the ministry of Jesus, and how he spent three years of accomplishing productive ministry by healing the sick, feeding the hungry, and ministering to those in need, we take delight. We delight in the fact that he not only ministered to us, but also shared lessons on God's grace and salvation; and how we should treat one another. He taught us, that we should love each other with unconditional love that does not judge, hate, or envy.

With that said, it is my prayer that this Lenten Season doesn't just come and go, but that we take the opportunity to realize that Christ gave his life for us. This is what the celebration of Good Friday and Resurrection Sunday represents, the true sacrifice. We should celebrate, that he died, he arose, and sits at God's right hand making intercession on our behalf, to this day!

Because of this, he is worthy of celebration!

Prayer: Father God, let us remember why we celebrate the Lenten Season. Help us not to miss the point of Jesus' life, death, and eventual resurrection. He died for our sins, so every now and then we humbly ask You for grace and mercy. Help us to make the Lenten Season a time to serve, honor, and glorify Your name. We thank You for the cross! Amen.

February 15th

GOD'S PRESENCE IS GUARANTEED

Isaiah 43:2 “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you, when you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.”

God assured the nation of Israel that He had redeemed them and that the inhabitants were His people. They were given the assurance that no matter what they had to go through that He would be with them. When we become members of God's family and are in Christ, we are given guarantees that nobody else can match. We are recipients of eternal guarantees of love, mercy, grace, forgiveness and salvation. Along with those spiritual blessings, come others, e.g., unspeakable joy and peace that surpasses all understanding.

No matter the storms, losses, and trauma we experience in our lives, He is with us. We find the promise in Hebrews 13:5: “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.” He knows exactly what we are going through. Whether we feel that He is responding or not, we can be assured that He is doing something. It may appear that He is silent, not hearing our prayers, but He is always at work. Whatever He is doing will be for our good and His glory.

We can count on God's faithfulness. “Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness! Morning by morning new mercies I see; All I have needed. Thy hand hath provided; Great is thy faithfulness, Lord unto me!” The words of this hymn let us know that we have a Father, a Savior that we can depend on, count on no matter what.

Prayer: Lord God, thank you for loving me the way that you do. Your love has no limits. I am confident of the fact that whatever transpires during my life's journey, You are and will be omnipresent every step of the way. There is no one greater than You. May I seize opportunities to let others know how great you are so that they will desire to have a relationship with You. I give You all the honor, glory and praise that you deserve. I love You, worship You and adore You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Rev. Dr. Shirley Roberts

February 16th

LET'S NOT FORGET

Psalm 103:2 (KJV) "Bless the Lord O my soul and forget not all His benefits."

Lent is a season of reflection and preparation before the celebration of Easter. As believers, we observe the 40 days of Lent and we remember the sacrifice of Jesus. During the season of Lent, there should be a time of fasting, praying and repenting.

As we reflect on the true meaning of this season, we should never forget the sacrifice Jesus made for the entire world. "For GOD so loved the world, that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him, shall not perish, but have eternal life." – John 3:16 (KJV)

GOD, by example, shows us what true love is – when you are willing to give freely to the point of sacrifice. Jesus accepted our punishment, paid the price for our sins, and then offered us eternal life. How can we forget such a great sacrifice.

The world takes the sacrifice of our Savior for granted. But as believers we are grateful for the price that was paid. Every day we should thank GOD for loving us so much that He would sacrifice His one and only Son. GOD did not wait for us to accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior. But GOD demonstrated His own love for us in this: "While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." – Romans 5:8

Take a moment to reflect on how good GOD has been to you. Look back and see how far GOD has brought you. Do you remember the time when you found yourself in a very dark place? Do you remember the time when your need was greater than your resources? Our GOD of love, grace, mercy and compassion, came to our rescue every time. GOD has been so good to us. He has been our strength from day to day; and He has been our water in a dry land, and a shelter from the storm. I will not forget the sacrifice GOD made by giving us His Son, Jesus. As soon as Easter Sunday is over, don't forget about the price that was paid for your sins and my sins. Don't forget about our GOD who is an ever present help in the time of trouble. LET'S NOT FORGET!

**Your sister in Christ,
Sister Ruth Davis Deas**

February 17th

LOVE SONGS

The Song of Solomon 7:10 "I am my beloved's and his desire is toward me."

Right after Christmas and New Year's celebrations, the stores begin stocking items for Valentine's Day. I'm at the point in my life where the monetary tokens of love are nice but are truly not the be all and end all of what I want and need. I want and need a life partner, a ride or die partner. And recently I had the opportunity to truly examine my thoughts about this.

Not too long ago my husband and I were driving back from Long Island and as usual he had on an oldies radio station. *You Make Me Feel Brand New* by the Stylistics came on and, maybe because I hadn't heard it in a long time, and I wasn't driving, I found myself really paying attention to the lyrics. When it got to the part, "For God blessed me with you," I had to seriously reflect and give God thanks right then and there for how He blessed me with my spouse, truly my ride or die partner.

When we got home, I remembered that The Song of Solomon is a love story included in the Bible and began reading it. There are many interpretations regarding the meaning of this book, ranging from the emotional and physical aspects of love, to God's relationship with Israel or to the church's relationship with Jesus. I was reading it for the physical and emotional interpretation as it relates to marriage and I had to smile when I came to 1:15-16 ¹⁵"How beautiful you are, my darling, How beautiful you are! Your eyes are like doves. ¹⁶How handsome you are, my beloved, and so pleasant! Indeed, our couch is luxuriant." And 2:5 "Sustain me with raisin cakes, refresh me with apples, because I am lovesick." Another verse of *You Make Me Feel Brand New* says, "With you I'll always have a friend, you're someone who I can depend, to walk a path that sometimes bends." As years pass and the routine daily obligations of work and family set in and put you on cruise control, it is easy to forget to complement one another once in a while and to forget that exquisite "lovesick" feeling that brought and held you together in the first place. And, as you go through the good and the difficult times together, relying on one another, it can become easy to take your "friend" for granted. Both of these "Songs" gave me an opportunity to think about my marriage, what I do well in it, what I need to improve and how, with God's help, I can be a better spouse and have a better, stronger relationship to make us both feel "*Brand New*."

In this Lenten season, I pray that every one of us will take a moment to reflect on whatever relationships we have, with a spouse, with a significant other, with family, with friends and ask God for guidance and to point us in the direction that will enhance those relationships so that they will be to His honor and glory and to our benefit.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, I have a litany of things to thank You for but, at this time, I want to especially thank You for blessing me with my spouse and partner. Please help me to be generous with compliments and stingy with criticism. Help me not to be complacent and selfish but to have a loving, giving spirit. I pray that You continue to keep Your hedge of protection around our relationship and Your hands joined with ours. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Sister Leslie Allen, Steward and Class Leader, Class #30

February 19th

HUMBLE YOURSELF AND PRAY

1 Samuel 17: 17-18 “¹⁷Now Jesse said to his son David, “Take this ephah of roasted grain and these ten loaves of bread for your brothers and hurry to their camp. ¹⁸Take along these ten cheeses to the commander of their unit. See how your brothers are and bring back assurance from them.”

Many times in life we think certain people, things and tasks are below us. Thinking we are better than others, when in fact, to God we are all the same. We believe small tasks of helping others will get us nowhere. These beliefs must change through the humbling of ourselves. Think of it in this way...How can God bless us with big things, if we are unwilling to take on the small?

If David had thought this way, he probably would not have had favor with God. Can you imagine if David told his father, I'm no delivery boy...I am the chosen one?" Samuel passed over David's seven brothers before the Lord told him to anoint David.

“Therefore, humble yourself under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.” (1 Peter 5:6)

David, knowing he was the anointed one, still took on the task of delivering that grain, bread and cheese, which put him in the position to face Goliath and defeat him. God was on his side.

Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.” (James 4:10)

In actuality the little stuff effects the greater. Small acts of “Actual Love” bring “Greater Grace.” Humble yourself and Pray and Pray and Pray some more!!! Goliath must fall, in the name of Jesus. Injustice must fall, in the name of Jesus. Humble yourself and Pray.

Prayer-Abba, Father, thank you for loving me and allowing me to humble myself before you. Giving me chance after chance to get it right to have your will working through my life. I Praise you and I love you – In Jesus name, AMEN

Sister Robyn Williams

February 20th

CAN I HAVE A WITNESS!

Isaiah 43:10 “You are my witness,” declares the Lord.

Have you ever seen a 4th of July fireworks show?

Most of us have been entertained by such a display. But do you realize what made the display so remarkable? It's not the fact that it exists, it's the fact *that you witnessed it*. If a fireworks show was delivered in Siberia with no one to see it, it would be worthless. The importance to the creator of the show and the hard work put into it is that *it's witnessed*.

I believe one of the purposes of the Jewish people in the Bible were to act as a witness to the greatness of God. They saw what the Lord did in Egypt; a world power at the time. They saw the ten plagues that broke the will of the Egyptians. But they also saw the power of God give them an escape when He opened a sea, created a pillar of fire, fed thousands each morning, and gave them a set of everlasting laws.

God needed a witness to His amazing work. Parting a sea with no one to witness it serves little purpose.

The Jewish people recorded God's actions well. Their witnessing of the sun that stopped overhead during a major battle, a blazing furnace that did not kill Shadrack and his buddies, a whale that held Jonas, and hungry lions that did not touch Daniel are vividly witnessed and recorded in the Old Testament.

Once the Jewish people proved to be able witnesses to the physical acts of God, the Lord allowed them to witness the ultimate of His holy hand. The Jewish shepherds witnessed the angels declaring Jesus' birth. Once the Savior became an adult, the Jewish people witnessed the ministry of Jesus as He delivered life changing lessons and performed miracles. And finally, they witnessed His presence on a cross, His death and His resurrection. God needed reliable witnesses to experience, record and share the life of Jesus. We are Christians today because the life of the Christ *was witnessed*.

Now, it's your turn to be a witness for the Lord. It's unlikely you'll witness a person turned into a pillar of salt, or the calming of a sea by a few words from Jesus. But you probably will see evil and sin overcome by the power of Christ. You will see wickedness overcome by love, you will see the peace of God overcome the most intense grief. What if the Lord allowed you to witness a crime-ridden drug addict find the Lord, recover and eventually prosper—do you think He wants you to remain silent about it?

Jesus is alive today, if He's in your heart, you know this to be true. Be a witness to that gift of salvation. Not only on Easter, but every day!

“It will be a sign and witness to the Lord Almighty in the land of Egypt. When they cry out to the Lord because of their oppressors, He will send them a savior and defender, and He will rescue them.” (Isaiah 19:20)

Brother Isaiah Tremaine

February 21st

TO GOD BE THE GLORY!

John 14:13 (NRSV) “I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.”

During this Lenten Season, let's take time to focus on our prayer life. In Bible Study, we are currently reading, ***The Battle Plan for Prayer*** by authors, Stephen and Alex Kendrick. In Chapter 4, *Why: The Ultimate Purpose of Prayer*, the Kendricks write “Ultimately, all prayer is for the glory of God.” I had to pause and think about this statement and what it means. Christians often use the word “glory”...“to God be the Glory”...“we give you all the honor, glory and praise”...“we give God glory”...etc., but may not know what the true meaning is. According to the Kendricks, the glory of God is “when God reveals a glimpse of who He is. Awesomeness on display. When he reveals His glory, He is unwrapping a measure of His identity...His holiness, His power.” When God answers our prayers, He is revealing Himself to us in His way for us to witness His glory firsthand. For God to reveal Himself and share an attribute or part of Him, it shows that He is in a serious relationship with us. The Kendricks continue that when you pray for something and ask for it in Jesus' name (John 14:13), “you should be prepared for God to do what He knows will bring Him the most glory.” That is both a comforting and powerful statement. God knows what is best for us and only offers his best as we trust Him and receive His son when we ask for something of Him. When God does answers our prayer, He is revealing a side of Him that He wants us to know...whether it is His patience, His compassion, His wisdom, His protection, His strength, His healing power, and ultimately His love!

The Kendricks believe when God answers our prayers and shares these intimate moments, our response should be to **worship**, which means to glorify God!!! We are so thankful for God's response that when we offer Him worship, we praise Him and thank Him for his revelation! When we share our amazing testimony with others, we give God glory. Prayer does bring God glory. Even when we do not pray as we should, God continues to be glorified as: our sustainer by waking us every morning, our provider by putting food on our table and clothes on our backs, and our protector through traveling mercies as we travel to work daily!

My Prayer: Father, thank You for Your intimacy and knowing what's best for me as You answer my prayers. Please forgive me as I let my “busyness” rob You of my prayer time!!! I commit to doing better and doing more in this relationship. I cannot wait for what You have in store for me and I praise You in advance for Your next reveal!!! In Jesus' name. AMEN.

Sister Sherrill Austin, Steward and Class Leader, Class #7

February 22nd

GREATER IS HE WHO IS IN YOU

Psalm 27:1 “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?”

Scripture reading: Psalm 27

Be ready to challenge the Devil. Don't be afraid. You will be delivered from fear if you believe. You can have “ears to hear” (Matt. 11:15) or ears that do not hear. Ears that hear are ears of faith, and your ears will be so open to what is spiritual that they will lay hold of it.

When the Word of God becomes the life and nature of you, you will find that the minute you open it, it becomes life to you; you will find that you have to be joined up with the Word. You are to be the epistles of Christ (2 Cor. 3:3). This means that Christ is the Word, and He will be known in us by our fruits. (See Matthew 7:16-20.) He is the life and nature of you. It is a new nature: a new life, a new breath, a new spiritual atmosphere. There is no limitation in this standard, but in everything else you are limited. “*He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world*” (1 John 4:4). When the Word of Life is lived out in you because it is your life, then it is enacted, and it brings forth what God has desired. When we quote something from the Scriptures, we must be careful that we are living according to it. The Word of God has to abide in you, for the Word is life and it brings forth life, and this is the life that makes you “*free from the law of sin and death*” (Rom. 8:2)

Thought for today: The Word not only gives you a foundation but also puts you in a place where you can stand and after the battle keep on standing.

Brother Randy Montgomery, Steward and Class Leader, Class #9

February 23rd

LOVE

James 2:8 “If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself ye do well.”

To me love is many things: Love of family, love of children – they are a blessing from God. Being blessed with my first granddaughter, she came into the world on January 4th, it was a freezing cold day. The roads to St. Barnabas Hospital were very icy. However, thank God we made it safely. I loved being in the delivery room watching my first granddaughter, Cierra make her great debut into the world. What a beautiful sight! Today I am a grandmother of 6 beautiful grandchildren and I love them all dearly!

I’ve always enjoyed and loved the places I’ve worked. With the late Governor Cuomo assisting the team in building the model for the entire Times Square area, which is now loved by many. Also working for the first black Mayor of NYC, Mayor David Dinkins. Working in City Hall was a beautiful experience with a rainbow of beautiful people of all ethnic backgrounds. That is where I first met Mayor Bill de Blasio.

I loved and learned a lot working with the NYC Department of Homeless Services. You had to have a strong heart, mind, a lot of patience, and respect for the people. Please don’t feel sorry for them because even though they are on the streets or in shelters they are proud people who we have to embrace and not pity. I worked there two years; I learned a lot and gained a deeper love for people.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith. (Galatians 5:22)

Prayer: Thank you Jesus for instilling in me love. I love life every day. I am thankful that Jesus woke me up to see another beautiful day whether it is raining, sunny, or snowing. Every day is a blessing of a day even when it doesn’t go as I planned, because my Jesus never fails me. I look forward to each Sunday where I can share my love, hugs and kisses with all my St. Matthew family.

Sister Carol Wright, Trustee

February 24th

OH NO, GOD IS NOT THROUGH YET?

2 Cor. 12:9-10 ***“But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. ¹⁰ That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”***

Why do we go through trials and troubles? If God loves us so much, wouldn't He protect us from all hurt, harm and dangerous situations? We often encounter situations where we find ourselves asking God “Why me?” or “why now?” At these times we must come to realize that we are leaning on our own understanding. Our ways are not God's ways.

God puts us through various situations so that He can use us. When we go through trials and emerge triumphant, our testimony can quite possibly see a brother or sister through their own situation. We have a testimony to share. God has prepared us to bring Him honor and glory so we must never give up hope, continuing in our faith and always remembering that weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning; knowing that these trials are God's will for us to be a witness to others.

Paul the apostle was a perfect example on how God works on us to be a witness for Him. Paul was beaten, imprisoned, shipwrecked and experienced all sorts of danger. Paul said, “When I am weak, then I am strong.”

God gives us the Holy Spirit to be with us, to guide us in spite of the fact that we are sinners saved by grace. We are never alone if we truly love the Lord as our Savior, believing that He suffered, bled and died for us, rose from that dead and baptizes us with the Holy Spirit. So lean on God and be led by the Holy Spirit because God isn't through with you yet, and you don't have to go through it alone!

Prayer: Lord God, I know I am a sinner saved only by Your grace and mercy. Thank You for sending Jesus to save me and the Holy Spirit to guide me. May I be a witness for You and bring You all the praise, all the honor, and all the glory. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Sister Terrie Stanley Roberts, Steward and Class Leader, Class #25

February 26th

FAITHFULNESS

Lamentations 3:24 "The Lord is my portions, says my soul, Therefore I hope in Him".

Many people deem to believe God has called them to live successful lives. In fact, He calls each one of us to live faithful lives; lives of obedience, devotion, worship and service. With each day there often remains a residue of things left undone, unsaid, unachieved or unconquered. Each day has its own measure of failures, its own degree of trouble (Matthew 6:34) and its own lingering doubts.

As you conduct a full review of your day, the bad as well as the good, it may be helpful to recall these words:

"God Promised"

God has not promised skies of blue or flower pathways all our lives.

God has not promised the sun, without rain, Joy without sorrow, peace without pain.

But God hath promised strength for the day, Rest for the labor, Light for the way. Grace for trials, Help from above, Unfailing sympathy and Undying Love.

You may not have been as successful today as you would have liked, but every day you are faithful to the Lord, is a success for Him. Remember the things He has promised and that regardless of your performance today, as you give your whole heart to Him, He makes up the difference.

Prayer: Lord, I thank you for loving me and, even when I've done all I can do in Your name, You are there to carry me through. In Jesus' name I pray, AMEN.

Sister Teri Corum, Steward and Class Leaser, Class #11

February 27th

WON'T HE DO IT!!!!

Jeremiah 29:11-14 "For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord. They are plans for good and not disaster, to give you a future and a hope. In those days when you pray, I will listen. If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me. I will be found by you, says the Lord. I will end your captivity and restore your fortunes. I will gather you out of the nations where I sent you and will bring you home again to your own land."

Do you know what it is like to struggle financially every day and work a full time job? Back in 2014 -2015, I was enjoying mountaintop experiences in my life when it suddenly all came crashing down in the fall 2015, and thus my valley experience began. Nevertheless, I kept the Faith, Prayed, studied God's Word, had a song on my heart and kept the above referenced scripture planted in my heart. Also, I constantly reminded myself daily what God had for me is for me.

Beginning in the Fall of 2015, I had been working on a plan to find a new job so that I could retire in June 2017, after my daughter would graduate from College in May 2017. But, in light of my struggles, that became more and more an unrealistic goal. However, in January 2017 a co-worker, who had become a sister-friend and was also a fellow Christian, announced that she would be retiring in May 2017. I was so happy and proud of her, especially since I watched her grow up in the company. Shortly, after her announcement she came to my office and closed the door and asked me when was I retiring? Then at that moment, the spirit of fear hit me and I began to share with her my fears of being a single parent, that my daughter was still in college, bills due, house needed work, and the list went on and on. Never mind the fact that I have always worked and the very thought of retiring with no job gripped me to the core. FEAR!!!! My sister- friend stated, "Let's run your figures of what you should be bringing home if you were to retire in June 2017." When we ran the figures I came to realize that if I retired and found a job making eleven dollars, I would be equal to what I presently brought home at that time. So anything over eleven dollars would be extra income and that could put me ahead of the game financially. Therefore, my next step was to make an appointment and visit the Pension Department to determine the actual amount that I would be living off of, until I could find another job. All the while, I was praying about such a big decision that I needed to make. What happened after I prayed I would have never even begun to imagine. The Lord just gave me such a release about my decision. I had peace that surpassed all understanding and it was no doubt in my mind that I was making the right decision. As planned, I retired in June 2017, after 35 years of service, and my daughter graduated from College in May 2017. It gets better!!! Within a few days after I announced my retirement I was approached by a Chief of another department asking me to work for him and all I had to do was say yes. Look at GOD!!!

I have now been retired and working for seven months and in that time I have been on a few vacations, paid off debt, bills are current, established a savings account and finally I am renovating my house. Finally, I can start to work on the next phase and plan that GOD has for me.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I thank you for the valley experiences in my life because without them I would not know how to truly appreciate and be grateful for the Mountaintop experiences when they come. I also thank you for providing Your word, answering prayers right on time, placing songs in my heart and a Christian sister-friend in my life in order to remind me to look at the big picture as I continue to trust in the promises that You have given to me.

Sister Shelley D. Harris, Steward and Class Leader Class #22

February 28th

LISTENING and DOING

James 1:19 (NLT) “Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to be angry.”

During this Lenten Season, I pray that we will begin to practice the above Scripture with our ears, mouth and mind (emotionally); loving and respecting our spouses, friends, neighbors, families, and all who we meet daily. Are you ready to experience the joy of peaceful relationships with GOD and others, even in the midst of difficult times?

James states: “Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind comes your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.” – James 1:2-4 (NLT)

Therefore, let’s live and practice what we profess and preach; everyday GOD gives us our lives to abundantly bless others. Just do it! Amen!

**Your brother in Christ,
Rev. Dr. James E. Deas, Sr.**

March 1st

WORSHIP IS A LIFESTYLE

Romans 12:1 (AMP) “Therefore I urge you brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a loving sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, this is your true and proper worship.”

Romans 12:1, is how the Apostle Paul describes true worship. Worship is an experience, not an occasional activity. It is not limited to the sanctuary or, Sunday mornings. We can worship by praying, reading God’s Word, singing, and taking communion. Our motivation to worship God: mercy, grace, hope, love, joy, eternal life, wisdom, forgiveness, patience, righteousness, and much more.

Presenting our bodies means giving to God all of ourselves, our hearts, minds, thoughts, and attitudes. We must give up control of these things to God. To truly worship God, we must let go of self-worship; our goal, true spiritual worship.

John 4:23, “But a time is coming and is already here when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit [from the heart, the inner self] and in truth; for the Father seeks such people to be His worshippers.” In what ways do we find ourselves “going through the motions” of worshipping because of tradition? Worshipping out of obligation is displeasing to God and is in vain. We worship to bring honor to God. He deserves our worship.

Worship is God centered and only reserved for God. Worship is to glorify and exalt God to show our loyalty and admiration to our Father. We are not to worship any saints, prophets, angels, statues, or any other idols.

Prayer: All Knowing God, thank You, thank You, thank You. I cannot thank You enough for all You have done for me. Thank You for ordering my steps on this journey to living a life of worship. I pray that this devotional is a blessing to all that read it. I also pray that each of us worship in spirit and truth. I praise You and magnify Your name. Amen, Amen and Amen.

Sister Kathleen Turpin Merritt, Steward and Class Leader, Class #13

March 2nd

BEFORE THE JUDGE

2 Corinthians 5:10 “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.”

Eleven-year-old Jesse Lyle and his fifteen-year-old brother Josh Lyle, nervous and fearful, found themselves in a courtroom with detective Jack Mook. The detective was a big, rugged, no nonsense veteran of the Pittsburgh Police Force. Mr. Mook was also a committed bachelor; with his job he found no time for a family. For fun he punched people, that is, he volunteered at the Steel City Boxing gym in Pittsburgh where he taught boxing to underprivileged kids. “Most of the kids who come in the gym are street kids,” said Mook. “Almost all of them have been born into poverty.” They have been rejected and deemed unworthy in the eyes of many.

Long before their date in court, Detective Mook had been working with Jesse and Josh at the gym. He really liked the strength of character he found in the boys. And the boys seemed to admire the police officer. So, when they suddenly stopped showing up, Mook didn’t understand and went looking for them. Soon he found the older brother on a street corner. He asked why they had stopped coming; at that point tough Josh Lyle started crying. Detective Mook listened and learned just how difficult the brothers had had it. Unknown to him, the boys were parentless and in a foster home with foster guardians who were extremely abusive and neglectful. “They have had it as bad as bad can get,” said the detective. That was enough for the cop. He cashed in some favors and got the kids placed in a new home—*his*. He became their foster parent. The relationship went so well that within two years he adopted the boys. That’s why they were in court. When Lyle and Josh learned that they weren’t in trouble, rather they had a new father; they broke down in joyful tears.

The dark and light of Easter plays out in a similar fashion to what those poor brothers went through. The disciples who followed Jesus often experienced doubt, trouble, and lack of faith. Jesus often chastised them for their unbelief. I’m sure seeing Jesus on that cross had to be the absolute low point for them. However, at the end of His ministry, they realized there had been a divine plan, a great purpose for everything.

For Jesse and Lyle standing before a judge had to be terrifying. However, they were loved and were being given a new life. Many of us wake up with worries and anxieties. Sometimes all the good in the world seems to be crushed by evil. But we’re not condemned; we are loved! Jesus was not conquered by evil, rather He became eternal Light. As we approach Easter, let go of troubles and focus on Jesus. The faithful have been adopted into a heavenly family with God as our Father. We have a new life awaiting, greater than anything we can imagine!

For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime; weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning. Psalm 30:5(NIV)

The Men’s Bible Class

March 3rd

THE BATTLE IS NOT YOURS

2 Chronicles 20:15-17 “Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God’s...You will not need to fight in this battle. Position yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord...”

Recently I have been faced with quite a few battles that blindsided me and threw me off guard as they came unexpectedly and some even from people I would least expect to be in battle with. Already in 2018 GOD is revealing to me that sometimes He will fight the actual battle through us, other times He will simply tell us to hold our position and do and say absolutely nothing, and then He will move Himself to completely take out the attack coming against us. If we are obedient and submit to God’s will we learn how powerful and how awesome He really is as He moves into battle to personally protect us. While in the battle He will give us peace that surpasses all understanding, help us to see the value in the valley, give us courage while under attack and while we are standing in troubled water He will wipe our tears away. We are reminded that while we do not know what is going to happen or how the story will end, if GOD is in control the enemy will not triumph over us.

Prayer: Father I thank you for the promise that I am never alone. Even in the midst of trouble You are there and You will stretch forth Your hand against the wrath of the enemy. When I was faced with an attack coming from the adversary and even sometime from those who claim to have my best interest at heart You stepped in right on time. You even used the most unlikely people to work on my behalf. For that I am grateful. I praise you and I lift up your holy name. Amen.

Sister Betty Neal Manton, Steward and Class Leader, Class #26

March 5th

ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

Psalms 103:1-5 “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.”

Today, believers and non-believers are too often inundated with circumstances and issues regarding their health, family, relationships, employment, politics, and social media, that their minds and hearts shift into periods of envy, anger, greed, loneliness, and hopelessness. Because we are so caught, we let too many opportunities go by not to glorify God, with our Gratitude!

I remember as a child, my parents constantly prayed and read the bible with me and my three siblings; reminding us to be thankful for everything we have and don’t have because our situations could be worse. Singing praises to God was a priority in our life. We were taught to demonstrate our gratefulness by not complaining. We didn’t own our home and live in a nice neighborhood, but we had a safe roof over our heads. We didn’t have the best looking or fitting clothes, because we grew up so fast. And when it comes to shoes; till this day, I am teased about my huge feet; but we never went outside naked or lacked proper clothes. We did not eat extravagant meals, but we were never hungry. The wisdom and lessons our parents taught and shared with us, rooted from the word of God helped me to be the “Man of Gratitude” I am today.

Our life-choices contribute to our destiny in life, in the short term. However, the best long-term choice/decision we can make, in our life is to seek forgiveness, repent from our sins, and accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior. His Unconditional Love and Grace will bring us through times of confusion, loneliness, despair, depression, and anxiety and make us victorious!

With an Attitude of Gratitude, and a heart of thanksgiving, we receive blessed assurance that no matter what we face, His Holy Spirit power, through our hearts of gratitude and focused minds on Him, break the chain of struggles upon us.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, We thank You, Father, for the abundant and unconditional Love and Grace You supply us with on a daily basis. We thank You that You loved us so much that You gave us Your only begotten Son, and that whosoever believeth in Him will not perish but have eternal life, in the name of Jesus. Oh Merciful Father, please forgive us for our sins and that we get so caught up in our selfish needs, desires, circumstances, and worldly distractions, that we do not give You the Glory You deserve. Restore and transform our minds so we can live each day in the Spirit of Gratitude. Let the light of Your love shine through us so others can experience our gratefulness for You. In Jesus’ Name. Amen.

Evangelist Drefus Tarpkin

March 6th

TELL SOMEBODY

Matthew 8:2-4 (MEV) “²*And then a leper came and worshipped Him, saying, “Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.”* ³*Jesus reached out His hand and touched him, saying, “I will. Be clean.”* *And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.* ⁴*Then Jesus said to him, “See that you tell no one...”*”

Was there ever a time in your childhood that you wanted a toy really bad and you got it. Maybe you got it for Christmas or your birthday or just because somebody loved you so much that you got it on no special occasion. Do you remember the joy and excitement that gift made you feel? You couldn't wait to tell your friends and show them your new toy. You might even let them touch it and play with it, but not those friends who you knew had a habit of breaking toys. You were so excited that for days if someone asked you what you got you could describe it in detail. What color it was, what it could do, and how you would use it and play with it.

If you have experienced the power of Jesus in your life, then you might remember feeling like that child with the new toy. Perhaps you were so excited that you couldn't wait to share the news with everyone you saw. You may have been like the leper who in spite of what Jesus said, couldn't help but to exclaim how Jesus blessed him. Maybe you're still feeling that excitement and you're sharing your testimony wherever you go. Or maybe it's been a long time and you find yourself taking God's gifts for granted. If that's the case, then it's time to reflect on how God's grace and mercy brought you through the most difficult of times. You have a testimony. Share it with somebody. That is the best gift you can ever give and for someone it will be the best gift they ever receive.

Prayer: Lord thank You for Your grace and mercy that You give daily. Thank You for Your blessings that You give freely. Father, keep me in a state of mind to praise You continually and to share Your blessings with others. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Brother Jerry Roberts, Trustee

March 7th

DO YOU BELIEVE!

Mark 9:24 “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”

Here was a poor, distracted father, around whom a great crowd had gathered. On the ground lay his son, rolling about, foaming at the mouth, possessed by an evil spirit that had tormented him for many years. Then Jesus drew near, and they brought the boy to Him. The father cried: “If You can do anything, take pity on us and help us” (Mark 9:22).

Our Lord’s reply put the father’s real need where it belongs: “Everything is possible for him who believes” (Mark 9:23). The father saw it: “I do believe”—but not as I should. Of how many of us is this still true! Perfect faith is wonderful, but who among us has it?

Yet this is not to lead us into despair. Let us begin with what we are and use what faith we have. This was what the father did. He could not fail to see his shortcomings and His need. He did not fail to do what he should do — seek from his Lord a stronger faith.

As we meet with him in His Word, we see anew the wonder of our Lord’s power and love. Let us begin with where we are and meet with Him often even though our days may seem untroubled and calm with no cloud to darken them. We still need the Savior every hour.

Prayer: Lord, save us from the blunder of believing that the faith we have need not be strengthened through the Gospel. Amen.

Sister Jacqueline Herran, Steward and Class Leader, Class #3

March 8th

PRAYER PROVES ITSELF

John 7:17 “If any one chooses to do God’s will, he will find out whether My teaching comes from God.”

The records of the achievements of prayer are encouraging to faith. Prayer is no untried theory. Prayer is a divine arrangement from God; designed for the benefit of mankind, intended as a means for furthering the interests of His cause on earth, and carrying out His gracious purposes in redemption and providence. Prayer proves itself. It is capable of proving its virtue through those who pray. Prayer needs no proof other than its accomplishments. If any man wants to know the virtue of prayer, if he wants to know what it can achieve, let him pray. Let him put prayer to the test.

God bless!

Sister Christine R. Laurore, Steward and Class Leader, Class #12

March 9th

AN AUDIENCE OF ONE

Galatians 1:10 ESV “For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.”

Audience applause is very important to some artist. However, I believe the freedom of true expression does not warrant any applause when God is the one we aim to please. Even a standing ovation is not gratifying to the artist who values his or her work as contentment in the eyes of God. While the drive or motive of an artist may be grounded in creativity and passion, there’s always something driving them forward. However, what if it’s God that’s driving them forward? If so, wouldn’t He be glorified? What if it were the same for all we do including work and our accomplishments? The metaphor of an audience is essentially most effective when articulating the purpose for the energy put forth in achievement. Who are we really trying to please ourselves, those watching or God?

Firstly, self- gratification should not be our concern. In 1 Corinthians 10:31, the bible states that “whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” Just think of how great it would be if our work ethics and attitude towards accomplishments were all aimed towards pleasing the one who gives us life and grace each day. Everything that Jesus did in his ministry demonstrated how we should aim to please God. Jesus was unselfish and giving for the sake of pleasing God. He acted out of love.

Additionally, pleasing others should not be our concern. While working with people can become gratifying, unfortunately their appreciation can be temporary, discouraging and sometimes self-motivated. When we fall short of their expectations they may condemn, ridicule and despise us. It’s not that way with God. When God is at the head of goals, our gifts are enhanced and the gratification developed is ultimately grounded in being in line with His will. God will never steer us wrong when we aim to please Him. In fact, He blesses us even more than we can ever imagine! (Ephesian 3:30)

Ultimately, we should aim to please an audience of one. That audience is God! Salvation is everlasting, while fame is temporary. What’s more gratifying than hearing the Father say well done!

This Lent season I challenge you to wake up each day with a spirit that is geared towards pleasing the Father. Let God’s love drive you to accomplishments and achievements. Aim to embody the spirit of Jesus in your planning, execution of tasks and accomplishments. Aim to please only God.

Prayer: Most Gracious Father, Help me to mediate on pleasing you in all I do, for your salvation is everlasting while fame is temporary. Allow any fear of displeasing others be overpowered with thoughts of the joy of pleasing you. May the words of my mouth and mediation of my heart be acceptable to only you. Through Jesus Christ I pray, Amen.

Rev. Crystal Newby-Reynolds

March 10th

CHANGE

Hebrews 13:8 "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever."

We should never take life for granted. Each day is special and a gift from God, not because we did anything to deserve it, but because God loved us so much that He sent His only Son, Jesus The Christ to die on a rugged cross so that we might have a right to eternal life. He made the sacrifice while we were yet sinners. His perfect blood shed for us. Jesus was obedient to His Father and we should be obedient to God the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit.** Most importantly Jesus arose from the dead, victory over death. Early on Easter morning He arose, He arose King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He lives and His Spirit lives in us.

In today's world we are in the midst of change, some good and some awful, from the White House, Main Street America, Climate Change, Terrorism, Disregard for Human Life, Use of Illegal Drugs, Loss of Good Character and Integrity and so many atrocities too numerous to enumerate.

I am reminded of a familiar song "Everything Must Change." The lyrics are poignant today:

Everything must change

Nothing stays the same

The young become the old

Mysteries do unfold

Cause that's the way of time

Nothing and no one goes unchanged

There are not many things in life you can be sure of, Except: Rain comes from the clouds

And sun lights up the sky and humming birds do fly. Winter turns to spring. Wounded hearts will heal. Never much too soon. Everything must change.

In this world of change it is comforting and a blessing to know that Jesus Christ does not change. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. Our loving Father is the constant in our lives, the rock of our salvation and the anchor we hold tightly.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for sending Jesus. Help us to strive everyday to be like Him. Thank you for your Grace and Mercy. Guide us and direct us and help us to do what is pleasing in your sight. In the precious name of Jesus Christ we ask it all. Amen.

Sister Shirley Grundy, Steward and Class Leader, Class#21

March 12th

STILL RESTING?

Matthew 23:45a “Then He, came to the disciples and said to them, Are you still sleeping and resting?”

Most persons rightfully rest after an arduous day’s and week’s work. Resting is important to rebuild cells. Resting is also important to keep our sanity, which is especially important given the constant pressure of work and life, that strains relationships and stretches us to the limits. However, even as resting repairs body functions, prayer fortifies humankind and aligns our will to God’s will for our lives.

In Matthew 26:36-46, the account is given of Jesus spending some precious moments in reflective prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. Gethsemane provided a tranquil and fortified place for Jesus to seclude himself in precious moments of reflective conversation with God, the Father.

Jesus chooses Peter and Zebedee to accompany him so that they too could learn the secret of travail. However, Instead of watching and praying they rested. Perhaps too tired from the pressures of life to receive the life transforming keys, they rested throughout this momentous occasion where the incarnate yielded and surrendered his will to that of God the Father. In resting, they also missed the “Sweet Fellowship” between Jesus and His Father.

As followers of Jesus, we too can miss ‘life-transforming prayer’. It’s easy to sleep because of the burdens we often carry. However, as Jesus demonstrates, there are benefits of yielding our will to the will of God the Father. When we yield our will, God makes our burdens become light! Don’t give up on the first attempt at prayer. Jesus was persistent. Jesus has given us a lead to follow. Don’t sleep in the middle of the process; just submit to God.

Prayer: Let’s use this season to encourage each other to live for Jesus always, and to pray one for another, so that we can become more and more like Jesus. Amen.

Rev. Carl Stuart

March 13th

GOD'S WILL

Luke 22:43 "Father I want your will to be done, not mine."

Our Father knows what things we have need of. He knows our beginnings and our endings. He gives us our desires, He lifts our spirits, shows favor when we don't deserve it and will give us more than we could ever imagine! If God is willing to bless us every second, minute and hour each and everyday, then we need to trust that He will guide us in the direction God has set forth in our lives. So we must persevere, not be afraid, apprehensive or just don't continue forward. If we walk humbly in His Will and push forward God will continue to direct our steps so His will not ours will be done.

Proverbs 3:5-6 "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight."

Micah 6:8 "He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. "

1 Peter 4:18 (NLT) "So if you are suffering according to God's will, keep on doing what is right, and trust yourself to the God who made you, for he will never fail you."

I want us to reflect on these scriptures to guide us this Lenten Season

Let us pray: Father God, continue to give us strength when we feel lost and forsaken. Guide us on the path that we may trust You because we know You will not fail us. Father, lift our spirits while we are on our journey in this life that corners us with hatred, envy, jealousy, fear, self-doubt, depression and loneliness. In You Father, I believe and trust that Your Will be done according to You. I ask for blessings Father God and Your arms to wrap around our family and friends to protect them from evil. I lift up those who we may not know to humbly be guided by You, Father. I thank You, Father God, for all you do in our lives! I pray humbly in Jesus' name. Amen.

Sister Versie McNeil, Steward and Class Leader, Class #14

March 14th

FORGIVENESS

Mark 11:25 *“And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.”*

Most of us have experienced a time when we felt wronged by someone. The situation may have been minor or felt huge. The situation may have been so hurtful that it seemed unforgiveable. It might have caused us to feel anger or hatred towards the person. But God wants us to forgive.

You might be justified in your feeling based on the situation. We all feel anger at times. Even in the most hurtful anger, God wants us to forgive each other. In the Bible, God tells us to forgive over and over again.

Matthew 5:4:4 *“But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”*

Our hearts are freed from the burden when we forgive. God wants us to forgive others because he forgives us.

Matthew 6:12 *“And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.”*

Psalms 32:1 *“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven; whose sin is covered.”*

Have you ever heard of an instance when a parent addresses the court at a trial of their murdered child and the parent tell the persecutor they forgive them? Do you wonder why and how a parent can do this? Trusting God and believing that Jesus died for our forgiveness of sin, is the reason we should obey God and forgive. Forgiving others frees our heart from the burden of the hate and anger weighing it down.

Matthew 6:15 *“If you don't let go of your resentment, if you refuse to forgive others, you'll be robbing yourself of your heavenly Father's forgiveness.”*

Prayer: Lord, God, oh God, Father, I thank You for Your forgiveness and love. I thank You that You sent Jesus to die for me in the forgiveness of my sins. Father, I ask You to help me in my unforgiveness. Lord strengthen me to forgive those that have misused me and remove my anger and hatred. Free my heart from the burden of hard feeling and soften my heart, Lord. Father, I ask You to walk by my persecutor and wash him clean, soften his heart and forgive his sin. This I ask in the mighty name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sister Karen Deas, Steward and Class Leader, Class #5

March 15th

SOMETHING ABOUT THE NAME OF JESUS

Mark 16:17 *“And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;”* **Romans 10:13** *“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”*

This Lenten Season, let's talk about the one who really made the sacrifice for us. We sacrifice chocolate, liquor, or food, during Lent; which is good, but it was Jesus who sacrificed His life for us! It was Jesus and there's something about the name of Jesus. You can call a minister, you can call your best friend in life, you can call your church class leader, you can call your doctor, you can call family members, you can even call Big Mamma, but there's something about calling the name of Jesus!

Are you trying to get rid of or give up a habit...Call on the name of Jesus! According to Mark 16:17; *in the name of Jesus, you can cast out devils* (bad habits) *and speak with new tongues.* And in Romans 10:13 it states, *For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved!* There's power in the name of Jesus! Not only are we saved in Romans 10:9, but I believe that we can be saved, even from ourselves, by calling on the name of Jesus!

Drugs are causing our young people to OD and die at a rapid rate! Many adults are addicted to prescription drugs. In order to be able to win the battle, we've got to call on the name of Jesus. You may say, I call on the name of Jesus so much He'll get tired of me calling! Nothing could be further from the truth!! Call Him day or night! Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus!

John 14:13 says that whatever we shall ask, if we ask anything in His name, He will do it! That name is Jesus! So as we go through this Lenten season, let us call on Jesus, who has sent us the Holy Spirit, as a gift to lead, guide, and direct, and remind us to call on Jesus! Yes, there's something about the name of Jesus!!!! There is power in the name of Jesus!!!

Prayer: *Father, I come in the name of Jesus; Jesus who makes intercession for me at your right hand. I believe that through Jesus Christ all things are possible. Please give me the strength to do what you would have me to do! In the name of Jesus I pray this prayer. Amen.*

Rev. Marian “MJ” Sykes Johnson

March 16th

PEACE

Psalm 18: 2 “The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer, my God is my rock, and whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my strong hold.”

Have you ever found yourself unsettled about a situation? You spend countless hours worrying about things you have no control over and/or you may have had controlled, but you made a choice and you're not sure if you made the right decision. The great thing about knowing God is that you can always bring whatever may be troubling you, to Him. For the scripture above, reminds us that we can take refuge in Him knowing that He provides us with the peace we need. (**John 16:33**).

Often, people will say they just need peace. God's peace will give you back the countless hours you used while worrying. If one finds peace, they are blessed. God continues to bless us even though we do not deserve it. I pray God's favor every day for my family and friends that God would move in their lives and give them the peace that they are seeking. One of the joys of my life is when I think of where God has brought me from and how he continues to bring me through the storms of life.

Growing up, the older folks would say, “If you haven't been through something just keep living”. In our day to day living we should remember, **Philippians 4:6-7** “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Prayer: Father God I come today, just to say thank You, thank You for peace, thank You for grace, thank You for love, thank You for shining Your face upon me. Help me Father to be better today than I was yesterday. Keep me in your word. Amen.

Brother Terry Spicer, Steward and Class Leader, Class #8

March 17th

ARE YOU COMMITTED?

2 Chronicles 7:14 (KJV) “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sins and will heal their land.”

As believers, we understand that all power comes from the God of our salvation. Once we have committed our lives to Jesus, the Holy Spirit lives within us. We must make the decision to listen to the Holy Spirit speaking to us and not succumb to the one, or the many forces, that seek to destroy us. We do this by reading God’s word daily, maintaining a strong prayer life, and serving the Lord faithfully, as we strive to be all that God wants us to be.

Through these acts of devotion, we assure ourselves of God’s everlasting love and redeem our faith. By engaging in fellowship with other believers, we grow collectively as a community and strengthen our resolve towards Him.

I realized that in order to best serve Him, I had to increase my knowledge by reading and studying His word. I had to keep my mind on Jesus to avoid sin and traps laid by the enemy. We must pray about everything. God’s word says “by prayer and petition continue to make your wants known to God” (Matthew 6:8). Be humble in repentance and consistent in your devotion and he will guide your footsteps on your path.

We are living in some turbulent times; on our jobs, in our homes, our community, our government, nation against nation, rumors of war, destruction of countries, political corruption, hate crimes, our children fallen prey within their own homes being starved, beaten and abused. God is not pleased with us. He says, “Turn from your wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sins and will heal their land.”

Prayer: Lord, I believe that all things work together for good, to them that love the Lord. And I pray that You lead us to be on one accord, forgiving us of our transgressions. You are a mighty God and greatly to be praised. In Jesus’s name, Amen.

Sister Jennifer Peaks, Steward and Class Leader, Class #27

March 19th

GOD LOVE IS EVERLASTING!

1 John 3:16 “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down His life for us.”

Sometimes an adult tells a child, “God does not love you when you are bad.” That is really not true. God always loves us. God loves us when things are going well and when things are going wrong. He loves us when in hurt and anger we ask why. God hates our sins but loves us sinners.

God could have remained in heaven cursing His creatures for spoiling His beautiful creation. Instead He laid aside His divine might and majesty for a while. In the person of His Son He took our human form and experienced our problems and pains. Finally, He let the forces of evil take His life. But He came back to life. By trusting in Him through the power of the Holy Spirit we can be sure of living with God forever.

We may be battered and shattered by life’s blows. Some of our troubles may never go away. Many things puzzle us. We may think nobody cares. But God cares for us right now. Love gives, and God gave all. Through the cross – God’s positive, permanent proof of His amazing love – He tells each of us clearly: “You mean a lot to Me. I really love you.”

Prayer: Gracious God, we praise You for Your wonderful love. Empower us to be like You: Faithful and forgiving, willing to sacrifice and suffer for others. Amen.

Sister Jacqueline Herran, Steward and Class Leader, Class #3

March 20th

GOD IS ALWAYS FAITHFUL

Romans 8:18 “The pain that you’ve been feeling can’t compare to the joy that’s coming.”

God is always faithful and we must have hope despite what we are going through. Hope is not wishful thinking. It is the sure and confident expectation that our future is in His hands. Hope means Jesus is the Lord of our todays and our tomorrows. “The risen Redeemer is coming again in power and glory, and we can live in expectation that we will one day be with Him forever”.

As I read this phrase I thought of my son. He was struggling to understand an event in his life. He was anticipating some good news and when the news arrived, it was not what he was expecting. Needless to say he was devastated. He said, “I prayed and prayed and God did not answer my prayer.” I assured him that God is always faithful and keeps his promises. I wanted him to understand that God did answer his prayer, just not the way he wanted Him to. Jesus tells us that we will experience disappointment and encounter trouble in this world. But good news is on the way.

To help my son begin to understand his disappointment better, we talked about Jesus going to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray and ask God to take away the suffering He knew He was about to go through. God didn’t answer Jesus’ prayer the way He wanted it to be answered either. Just like my son, God saw the bigger picture and answered Jesus’ prayer the way He wanted to. God knew Jesus had to be persecuted and resurrected, so that *we* could be saved and offered a *new beginning*. With the resurrection of Jesus Christ we gained victory over death and despair. It provides the means for us to receive a *whole new perspective of life*. Though we may endure pain, grief, disappointment and suffering here on earth, because Christ’s death was followed by his resurrection, we can know that such things are temporary and greater things are in store for us.

So, my son now understands Proverbs 3:5-6 “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding, acknowledge him with all your heart and he will direct your path.” He believes that as with the resurrection being the promise of a new beginning, God has a new beginning for him and that God is always faithful.

Prayer: Thank You God for ordering my steps in Your will and in Your way. I believe You want the best for me even when I may not understand. Open my heart to receive all that You have in store for me. Let me see the potential You have placed in me, so that I give You all the honor and glory. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

Sister Robyn Sorbino, Steward and Class Leader, Class #34

March 21st

MY FUTURE IS SO BRIGHT I GOTTA WEAR SHADES!

Jeremiah 29:11 “For I know the thoughts I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.”

I think it is safe to say that many Christians have experienced, at some point in their lives, a feeling of hopelessness or despair; a desire to give up because their situation looked so bleak. Well, in Jeremiah, the Lord reminds us that despite of how things look, how we feel, what the nay-sayers mutter, His children are overcomers! ALL OF HIS CHILDREN are conquerors because he has a plan for each one of our lives. This plan is for us to prosper and to have an awesome future! All of this comes to fruition when we trust in God our Father and believe that His word is true! This is where our faith comes into play. Faith is simply belief and hope in something we cannot see with our natural eye. If you think back over your life, I'm sure you can truly say that God has proven Himself time and time again. Therefore, there's no need to fall into despair. Because we are children of the Most High God, our future is so very bright WE GOTTA WEAR SHADES!!

Prayer: Dear Lord, I am so thankful that Your plan for my life is for me to be prosperous, to have hope, and to have a future. Father, when things don't look good and are not going the way I think they should go please, help me to remember Your Word and believe what YOU say about me. Bring back to my remembrance, oh God, all of the other times in my life that You have given me the victory over my circumstance. It is in Jesus' name that I pray this prayer. Amen.

Sister Michele Moore, Steward and Class Leader, Class #20

March 22nd

UTOPIA FROM A DISTANCE

Matthew 27:54-56 ⁵⁴*So when the centurion and those with him, who were guarding Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they feared greatly, saying, "Truly this was the Son of God!"* ⁵⁵*And many women who followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to Him, were there looking on from afar,* ⁵⁶*among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's sons.*

As much as I try not to, whenever I'm thinking about anything, a song comes into my head. I've read the scripture above many times, but when I read it recently I focused on the words "looking on from afar." In Luke 23 the phrase is written as "stood at a distance," and the resultant song that popped into my head was, "From a Distance."

The lyrics seem to put us in Utopia, where no one is in need, no one is hungry, no one is sick, and there are no instruments of war; there is only hope, harmony, and peace. The entire song seems to speak to us of what could be, but remains elusive. The song also reminds us that God is watching us from a distance; this reminder seems to encourage us to somehow get our acts together so that we could live in this imagined place or in a state of things in which everything is perfect.

This state of Utopia and being watched from a distance by God seem to be a polar opposite to God abandoning Jesus as he suffered and died on the cross. The scripture tells us that the three women (named and unnamed) in the scripture above were always close to Jesus, taking care of him during his ministry. And in John 19 they are again close to Jesus with his mother near the cross before he died. Jesus handed his mother and her care over to John and then for some reason the other three women ended up looking on from a distance when Jesus died. It could be that it was difficult for them to watch Jesus die after caring for him during his traveling ministry, from an outpouring of the unconditional love Jesus had given to them.

These women were also the ones who came to the tomb early on Sunday morning. One of them was given the privilege of being the first witness to his being resurrected and the first to bear such good news. The death and resurrection of Jesus has afforded us salvation for free. Another definition of utopia is heaven. The good news is that heaven is not out of reach or an imagined place. Salvation has given us the opportunity to be heirs to the promise of Jesus, that he will return and take us to be with him in heaven, forever.

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for knowing my name and that even though I am a work in progress you still love me. You provided the gift of salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus my Lord, so that heaven is no longer an elusive place, but a place that you have promised that I will be with you forever. In Jesus' name I pray; Amen, amen, and amen.

Blessings,
Rev. Dr. Donna Ho-Shing-Scott.

March 23rd

BE THE LIGHT, AND SHINE!

Matthew: 5:14 “Ye are the Light of the World.”

As we come upon another Lenten season, we find ourselves reflecting yet again on our lives, in hopes of improving those areas that may require attention. The world has become darker, and the ‘got hope’ slogan that once captivated a nation, has dimmed its lights into a democracy of darkness. Darkness that has penetrated even, the hearts of the believer who say with conviction, “I walk by Faith and not by Sight!

This era of darkness that we are now living in, has no respect of persons, it has spread like wildfire and has taken hold onto whoever is without ‘Him’ in them. But even as we face this dark hour in our country, and/or our lives, we must stay encouraged because Jesus came to overcome the world of its darkness, through his marvelous light. And this is the same light that we are to daily carry, into the world and among our respective houses.

We are the light of the ‘World!’ which is to say that we are God’s representatives here on the earth, and that we must shine as beacons of that light, throughout this fallen, and dark world. We must strive to impact people’s lives by providing hope and encouragement, through our examples of Christ’s righteousness and His goodness of hope that He provides, to a world that has been consumed and taken under by the ‘Prince of this World.’ We must believe what God has said about who we are in Christ! Jesus said that, “Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.”(Matthew 5:14)

We have a responsibility to take hold of his light that he has given to us, so that we can be a clear picture of who Jesus is to this dark world. We are mirrors, illuminating, impacting and making a difference in the lives of others as Christ did. The world is looking to us to be a light! They are in need of direction, clarity and guidance. Let us not give them a fuzzy, but a clear picture of Christ’s light working through us! Carry the Light.....

My Prayer: Father God, I pray in the name of Jesus, that you help your children to see and to know who they are in Christ! Touch upon their lives with the light of Your life, that they may carry this light for the rest of their lives so that they can be a beacon of light in the life of others, Amen.

Sister Tracey McGill, Steward and Class Leader, Class#17

March 24th

ALL THINGS NEW

Revelation 21:5 (AMP) “And he who sits on the throne said, Behold, I am making all things new. Also, He said, Write, for these words are faithful and true [they are accurate, incorruptible, and trustworthy].

God has blessed us with a new year and a new opportunity to start anew. Too often, too many of us dwell in the past. The past can hold us back from what God has planned for our future.

Isaiah 43:18-19 “Forget the former things; do not dwell in the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wastelands.”

2017 presented several trials, tests and challenges for me and many of the people I love and know: I struggled with the new man and his administration in the White House. The lies, divisiveness, ignorance, bigotry and his narcissistic personality, offended me, and his personal attacks on President Obama angered me. I am concerned about any and all people possibly losing health insurance. The visible resurgence of hate, discrimination and the dismantling of the civil rights gains is very disturbing and personal for me, as one who marched, boycotted, picketed and was tear gassed for the cause I was passionate about more than 50 years ago; my concerns are for people, known and unknown, who lost their homes to foreclosures; loss of family and friends to tragedy; life threatening health diagnosis; voting rights being challenged; and the list goes on.

Life is constantly changing. We must change also. We are creatures of habit. We become very comfortable with what we know; as a result, we do not want to change or do something new. I needed something new in my life to help me cope and navigate this changing crazy world.

I prayed and prayed for understanding, because I did not understand. Lord, help me! Please!

Bishop Gregory G. M. Ingram introduced the “All Things New” theme for the conference year. This theme is apropos for such a time as this. I have embraced a new attitude, a new word, a new understanding, a new walk and a new conversation. Ezekiel 36:26 “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you Your Heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.”

Prayer: All Knowing God, thank You for being the God of second, ten, a hundred and a thousand changes. Thank You for being the great “I Am”. Thank You for Your son Jesus and thank You for the Holy Spirit that dwells in me. Father God I love You and magnify Your name. Thank You for continuing to bless the body of Christ called Saint Matthew African Methodist Episcopal Church. I submit this petition in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Sister Kathleen Turpin Merritt, Stewart and Class Leader, Class #13

March 26th

COULD YOU NOT TARRY WITH ME ONE HOUR?

Matthew 26: 40 (AMP): “And He came to the disciples and found them sleeping and said to Peter “So, you men could not stay awake and keep watch with me one hour”?”

During the Lenten season, many people give up things such as overeating or gossip. I try to avoid things like these each day. Some days I am more successful than others. In lieu of giving up something though, I generally use this season to do a lot of self-reflection in every area of my life, asking questions such as “Am I cherishing and putting my best into all of my personal relationships”? “Am I being a good Steward with the money that God has blessed me with”? At work “Am I working hard each day or hardly working most days”? “Am I treating my body right by getting enough rest, exercising and eating right”? I also ask “Am I staying alert and awake while I wait for God to work situations out on my behalf”?

The last question that I ask myself always reminds me of Matthew 26. This chapter in the Bible is full of activity: Jesus gives his Disciples the exact time in which He will be crucified, the woman with the Alabaster Box of precious ointment pours it on the head of Jesus and the Disciples object calling it “wasteful”. Judas bargains with the chief priests as to what he wants in order to deliver Jesus to them, the Lord’s Supper occurs (some people mistakenly call it the “Last Supper”, however last I checked we still have Communion each First Sunday at my house of worship) ☺. Anyway, back on track... this is also the chapter in which Peter proclaims that he would never deny Jesus, that he would die for him, and, and, and... Jesus rebuffed him by saying that before the cock crowed that night, Peter would deny him not once, not twice, but three times!

Finally, after all of the above activity, we get to Matthew 40: 36, when Jesus goes to Gethsemane and brings Peter, James and John with him and makes a simple request, “Wait here and watch with me while I go pray”. We know from the account that Jesus came down 3 times to find them sleeping. The first time was not even an hour after he first left them! I often wondered why the 3 disciples could not stay awake. Jesus was doing some heavy toiling and he was at a crossroads. He was asking God to please remove the cup (the need to die for the sins of the world) from him. He resigned himself by saying “nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt”.

Through all of this toiling and working, the Disciples snoozed. They totally missed the miracle of Jesus surrendering His will to the Father God, so that we could all have eternal life.

From this account in Matthew 26, I am motivated to, as the expression goes, “Stay Woke” while things are worked out on my behalf. My grandmother tells us grandkids that on days when she was younger and didn’t feel like going to work “need more” and “gotta have” kicked her right out of bed. I chuckle every time I hear her say it, however it reminds me of my faith. Sometimes it is very tempting to stay in bed and sleep as I have dealt with multiple difficult situations these last few years. However, my faith pushes me. My faith keeps me awake and alert and keeps me believing.

Prayer: Father God we thank You for who You are and for what You have done. We are grateful for the opportunity to stay awake, alert and prayerful as You work things out for our good. In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, in Jesus’ Name we pray, AMEN.

Sister Veronica Morton, Steward and Class Leader, Class #6

March 27th

HEARING AND BELIEVING THE WORD OF GOD

Exodus 15:26 “If you listen carefully to the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases For I am the Lord, who heals you.”

A beautiful woman of God and friend of mine heard that I was with various infirmities and having great difficulty due to declining health. She called me and offered up a prayer in intercession. After praying she said, “Healing believes the word of God.” After scolding me about not taking care of myself she told me that she would send me a CD that would drive home her point. After several days I received the CD in the mail. I played it several times and found it to be profound, powerful and uplifting and because of this I’d like to lift up these three points.

First and foremost we must we must hear the word of God and then we must obey the word of God, keeping His commands. “...lay hold of my words with all your heart (Proverbs 4:4) that we must worship God and give Him all the praise because He says, “Worship the Lord your God.....I will take away sickness from among you.” Exodus (23:25) we must continue to praise God in all things. “Praise the Lord, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise His holy name.” (Psalm 103:1) “Who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases.” (Psalm 103:3). Know that the Lord does not go back on His word. The word of God is His bond; He is incapable of lying. Therefore, if He says it then it is so. “I the Lord do not change...” (Malachi 3:6) “But for you who revere my name the sun of righteousness will raise with healing in its wings... (Malachi 4:2)

Secondly, the Lord has made us masters of our own being and commands us to be good stewards of our environment and all that concerns our health and wellbeing. How we live has a direct correlation with the health of our bodies. God commands that we take care of our bodies and admonishes us to take care of the physical self. “Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.” (Proverbs 4:23)

Lastly, believe that Jesus is the Son of God and trust in His word and that healing can be obtained through His power. Know that through prayer healing is possible. God will give whatever is needed to those who have the faith to ask for it. “Ask and it will be given to you....” (Matthew 7:7)

The Bible speaks often of miraculous healing through the work of Jesus Christ and faith in God. Our Lord is able to provide both physical and spiritual healing, and wants to do that for you! When you are overwhelmed with health problems, bad news, or relationship struggles, the Word of God can be your source of supernatural help. Don’t give up! God promises greater things in store.

Prayer: Father God, we give You all the honor, glory and praise. We thank You for being who You are. We believe in Your Holy word. We place all our trust in You Lord for You are the great creator. Father God, You created the human body and You know what we are in need of. Father God, there is no sickness or disease that can stand before You. We know whatever we are facing in our physical bodies is no match for Your sovereign power. God touch our bodies right now so that we may feel Your healing power. We ask this in the name of Jesus the greatest physician.

Brother Durwin Coppock, Steward and Class Leader, Class #1

March 28th

BE GRATEFUL IN ALL THINGS, GIVE THANKS

Philippians 2:14-15 “Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that no one can criticize you.”

Do you ever get bent out of shape over the things that don't matter? Most of us do it because we're negative by nature. Ever since Adam and Eve, we have been going around excusing and accusing. We excuse our own mistakes and then accuse others for their mistakes; we hide, and we hurt. We blame others for the problems in our lives. Amen.

There are 4 types of complainers:

4. The whiners. You can get up in the morning and say “Good Morning Lord” but the whiners choose to say “what so good about it?”

2. The Complainers. Their favorite expression is, “Nobody loves me.” They're good at wanting to have a pity party. They pout and complain when they don't get their way. We all know at least one.

3. The negative ones. They always have an attitude, all bent over and negative, not positive about anything.

4. The perfectionist. Nothing is ever good enough for them, “Is that the best you can do?” I know you can do better (smile).

Matthew 12:36-37 says, “But I say unto you that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgement. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.”

Prayer: Father God, I will give thanks in all circumstances at all times, even in the midnight hour for God hears a sincere prayer. This is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. Romans 12:2 “And be not conformed this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” I Praise You for Your Mercy and Your Unmerited Favor, and most of all I Praise You for this Joy that I have, this unspeakable Joy. I continue to put on the Whole Armour of God, that I may be clothed with Christ. I thank You and pray that everything that I do be to Your Glory. In the Name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, Hallelujah Amen.

Rev. Dolly Ryan Roberts

March 29th

WHAT DO YOU WANT?

Daniel 2:23 “I thank you and praise you, O God of my fathers, who has given me wisdom and might and has made known to me now what we desired of you.”

Children are quick to respond to their environment. Babies immediately cry when they are hungry, thirsty, tired, sick or wet. Toddlers are not at all bashful in communicating what they do and do not want. However, as we grow older, maturity teaches us to use discernment in making our desires known, that we give way to the needs of others in many situations. The Lord nevertheless tells us we are wise to always come to Him as little children, telling Him precisely what we need and want.

While looking at a man who Jesus knew was blind, Jesus asked him, “What do you want me to do for you?” (Mark 10:51) without hesitation he replied, “Master, let me receive my sight.” Jesus could see he was blind, yet He asked the man to make his request. God knows what you need “before you ask Him.” (Matthew 6:8) Yet, He says in His word, “By prayer and petition, continue to make your request known to God.” (Philippians 4:6)

Why pray for what seems to be obvious? Because in stating precisely what we want, our needs and desires become obvious to us. If we stop to listen to our own petition, we come face to face with our priorities, our hurts and our excesses. We see ourselves clearly and have an opportunity for repentance, to see the core of our issue, something we may have skirted or refused to handle. At other times we need to take action or say to someone, “Enough is enough.”

State your request boldly before the Lord tonight. He’ll hear you, He’ll respond to you and just as important, you’ll hear yourself and respond in a new way to Him.

Prayer: Lord, I thank you for helping me to see myself and for changing my heart to have Your will to be done in my life. In Jesus’ name I pray, AMEN.

Sister Teri Corum, Steward and Class Leader, Class #11

March 30th

COMMIT TO THE MINISTRY AS A PERSON SHOULD COMMIT TO MARRIAGE

Galatians 5:22-24 (Message Bible) "But what happens when we give God's way? He brings gifts into our lives; much the same way fruit appears in an orchard. We develop a willingness to stick with things, a sense of compassion in the heart, and a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people. We find ourselves involved in loyal commitments, not needing to force our way in life, able to marshal and direct our energies wisely."

If you are married, one of the keys to developing as a person should be commitment to your marriage. Your marriage should come before your position in the church; however, you should approach the work for the Lord with the same fervency.

Concerning commitment, I heard a story of a farmer with a chicken and a pig who loved him because he was so good to them. On the farmer's birthday, the chicken went to the pig and said, "Let's do something special for him." The pig replied, "That sounds great, but what can we do? The chicken said, "Let's serve him breakfast. I'll give him eggs, and you can give him bacon." The pig said, "Wait a minute. You are only giving an offering, but you're asking me to make a total commitment!"

It will require a total commitment to be faithful and do what you are called to do. The strongest key to having a successful marriage is communication. Likewise, in working with our pastor and leaders, communication is a must. The reason for misunderstandings is lack of communication. Jesus always took the time to communicate with His disciples. He knew that the communication of His ministry depended on it.

The need for communication works both ways, of course. The congregation needs to let their leaders know about potential problems, and leaders must take the time to communicate what is in their hearts to their people. If a leader is truly joined to his flock as a shepherd, the congregation will know his voice. People cry for security. In the ministry, we the congregation must make a commitment to the leader and the leader must make a commitment back to the congregation.

Prayer: Oh Lord please help us to develop a commitment to the church and God's ministry. In Jesus' name we pray Amen.

Brother Charles Brown, Steward and Class Leader, Class # 33

March 31st

THAT WONDERFUL MYSTERIOUS CHILD

Luke 2:40 “And the child grew and became strong; He was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on Him.”

Did the 12-year-old Jesus know He was going to die at 33-years-old?

Some might say no, why would He be given that information? He would be living in fear and anxiety for all the years leading up to it. That’s not a fair burden for a child to carry. I can think of very few of us who would want to know the time and day in which our lives will end. But Jesus was no ordinary child, He was not only the Son of God, He was *part of* the living God. So, in that state He knew everything already. Not only did He know everything, He was an architect of the master plan. He, the Father, and the Holy Spirit knew what had to be done from the dawn of time. So, of course, 12-year-old Jesus knew what awaited Him. He knew the suffering He had to endure to reach the desired goal—saving us all.

Thankfully, Jesus didn’t allow anyone or anything to stop Him from His divine purpose. Keep in mind, while on earth, His ministry was not engaged enthusiastically by everyone. Jesus was ridiculed, threatened by mobs, scorned, beaten, whipped, spat upon and given a death sentence. Yet He never gave up or even slowed down His desire to save us.

What is your desired goal that you’re willing to suffer to achieve?

Whoa, that’s a big question. Yes, it is—but life is a big thing. And we only get one time here on earth to achieve our goals. Was your goal to have a high paying job, money in the bank, a fancy house, the best car, fame and fortune? I believe if those were your goals, and you achieved them, you could still find that your life is incomplete. You can’t take any of those things with you to heaven. None of those material things have any value to God.

Let’s look to Jesus again for an example. He was strictly a people person. He didn’t own a house, possessions, or money. He easily could have been the richest person on earth, but He saw little value in that. No, with a known death date in His head, Jesus expended all His energy on us. Teaching us how to forgive, to be patient, to have mercy, to walk humbly, to love an enemy, and how to find the narrow path of salvation and putting God first—those things were of value to Him. Those things were worth the suffering, those things were worthy of the Christ.

One more question. So, when it comes to you, did Jesus die in vain? Were you worth the suffering, the humiliation, the pain of His life on earth? Have you used the redemption He gave you to engage salvation? Have you tried to mirror His life? Was it worth it for the 12-year-old Jesus to be aware of His own untimely death—for your sake?

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:6)

Brother Isaiah Tremaine



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