

March 1 – Shrove Tuesday

Daniel 9:3 "Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking Him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes."

Did you know there are 3 traditions for this day that ends one season and begins another? Likely, you are familiar with the tradition of eating pancakes, a 16th Century practice of using up all the rich foods before the period of fasting.

The second tradition is the burning of palms. Many people save the palms used to herald Jesus' arrival during last spring's Palm Sunday. The ashes are used then to mark the sign of the cross at the start of the Lenten period. What was once used for celebration and joy becomes a part of a ceremony reminding us of our own mortality..."from ashes you came, and to ashes you will return."

The third tradition may not be as familiar: bidding farewell to the Alleluia. Painting the word on a banner and rolling it up, then burying it in the ground symbolizes that Lent's 40 days are spent without the exclamation we shouted last Easter. We face the same fate as we bury our sins.

Read and reflect as we come full circle in our faith.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bhnpQgYDh34>



March 2 – Ash Wednesday

Joel 2:1 “Blow the horn in Zion; give a shout on my holy mountain! Let all the people of the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming.”

In this past year, our foundation has donated a dozen or so trumpets, flugelhorns, and pocket trumpets to youth in school music programs. Most of the youth who receive these instruments are beginners while some are more advanced in their playing skills. I like to imagine all of them together, playing as loudly and strongly as their lungs allow, gushing out a great blast of sound. Those within earshot might shudder at the sound, for it might not be in the best, harmonious resonance. But the blast would certainly get everyone’s attention.

As the Lenten season begins and our reflections increase, we focus our thoughts on our Savior. Whether your mental image of Him is as a baby, a fair-skinned man, a dark-skinned Middle Easterner, or hanging in death from the cross, He is coming.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MZ0tZhcIVrw>



March 3

Joel 2:12 “Yet even now, says the Lord, return to Me with all your hearts, with fasting, with weeping, and with sorrow.”

You’ve probably seen commercials in which someone goes out of their way to do a kind deed for another person, then that person goes on to do a kind deed for another, and so on. The “Pay It Forward” movement has been around for some time and, if going unbroken, can result in some amazing deeds.

What does Jesus ask of us than to do nothing more than to care for others? Rather than paying back for a deed done for you, what effect would come from paying it forward? Chances are your kind deed would be considered “Christ-like.”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-eQoaVAZCMs>



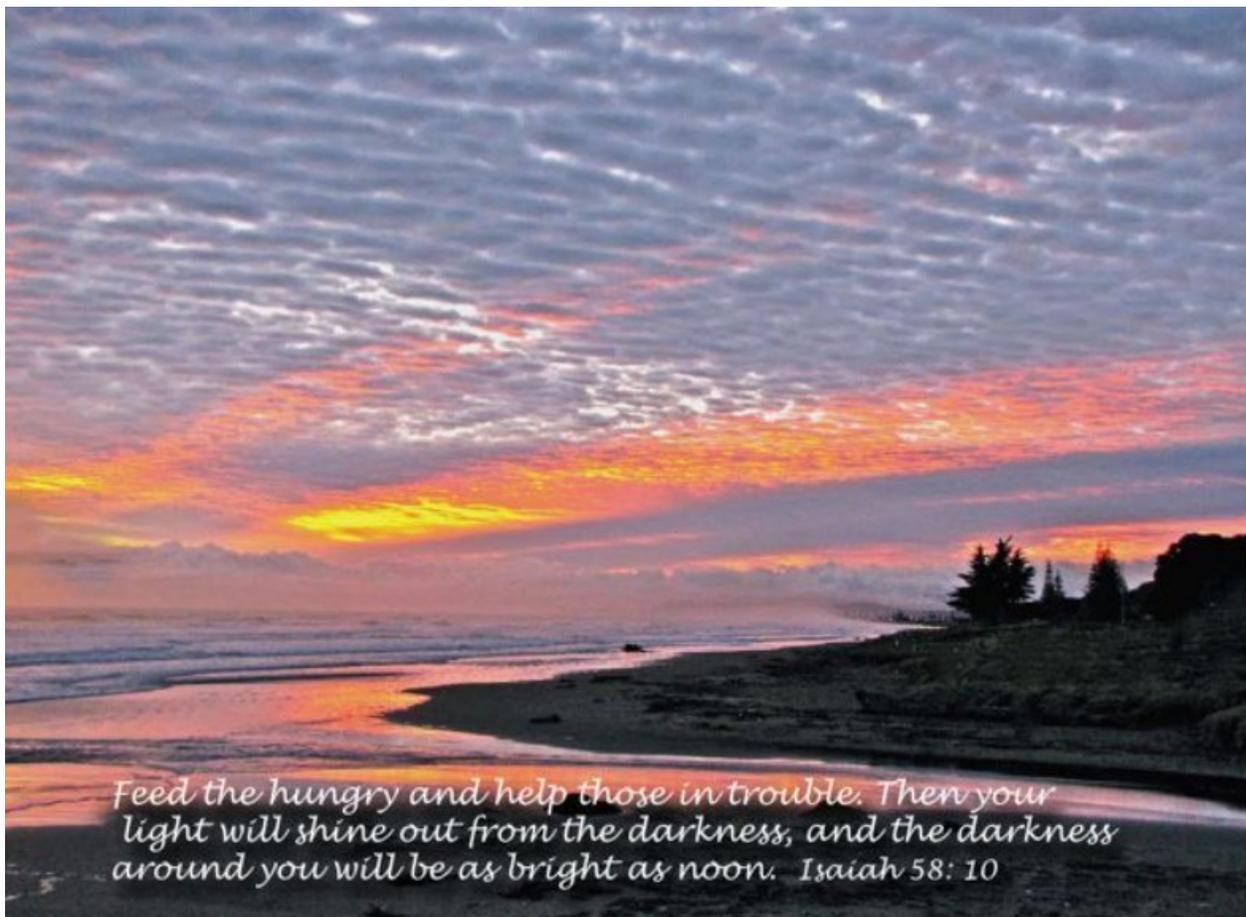
March 4

Isaiah 58:10 “If you open your heart to the hungry, and provide abundantly for those who are afflicted, your light will shine in the darkness, and your gloom will be like the noon.”

At this writing, 24 churches, congregations, and new worshipping communities of the Heartland Presbytery have declared that they are Matthew 25 followers. Matthew 25, like this passage from Isaiah 58, “calls all of us to actively engage in the world around us so our faith comes alive and we wake up to new possibilities.” Those possibilities call us to “act boldly and compassionately to serve people who are hungry, oppressed, imprisoned or poor.” There are so many ways to carry out this mission. Hot lunch centers around the city, food distribution centers, thrift shops, and so much more offer opportunities for volunteers.

What do you gain from working a lunch shift or making a donation of clothing? As Isaiah notes, “your light will shine in the darkness, and your gloom will be like the noon.” And the reward? The next verse in Isaiah tells us: “The Lord will guide you continually and provide for you even in parched places. He will rescue your bones.”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UB0-ZLzhnY>



March 5

Psalm 51:9 “Hide your face from my sins; wipe away all my guilty deeds!”

As a ninth grader at West Junior High School in Kansas City, Kansas, I served as manager of the basketball team. Too short and unathletic to make the team, I was happy to be around the boys who I admired. After practice one day and as a few of them and I walked the few blocks home, a pack of cigarettes appeared and an offer to share. Not wanting to be seen as a wimp, I lit up with the others. Long before any of the no-smoking campaigns and information about health dangers, we only enjoyed acting “grown up.” When I arrived home, my guilt got the better of me and I told my mother that some of the others were smoking. I guess I thought it would be better to “rat” on them and try to convince her that I was innocent. Little did I suspect that my breath and my clothing most likely smelled of smoke and she knew the truth. What was I thinking?

Do we try to convince ourselves that God won't know? Nothing can be hidden from Him. Our hope can only rest in the salvation and atonement of His gift on Jesus.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0LxJ52urGB8>

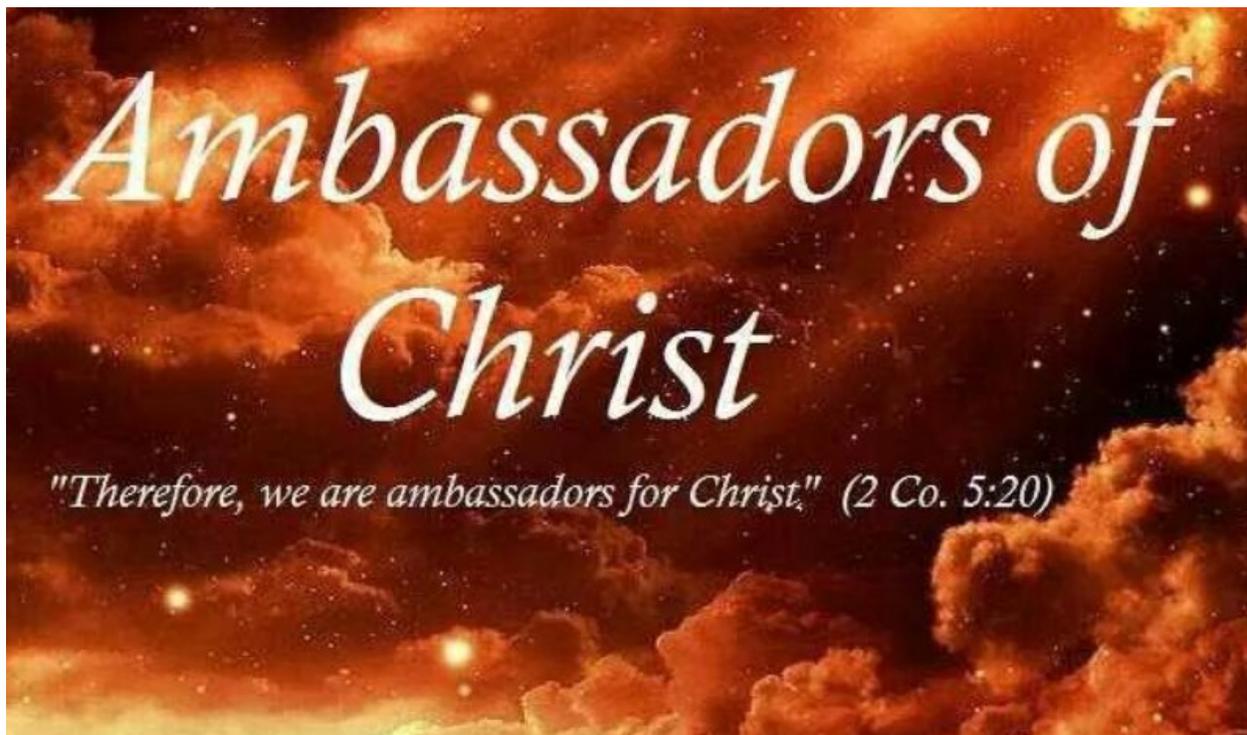


March 7

2 Corinthians 5:20 "So we are ambassadors who represent Christ. God is negotiating with you through us. We beg you as Christ's representatives, 'Be reconciled in God!'"

Our family enjoys (pre- and post-pandemic) going to Sunday brunch following church services. On one occasion, I forgot to leave my church nametag on the rack where it would be safe until my return and didn't notice that it was there, clipped to my shirt. When the wait staff member came to serve us, I couldn't help but notice a broad and bright smile cast my way. Then I noticed my nametag. Something as simple as that tag with my name and the church's name on it. At first, I was embarrassed, but then I realized this person connected with my advertisement. I felt sorry that working on Sunday morning to serve us may be causing this person to miss out on the joy we had enjoyed. Then I recalled that not everyone worships in the same way at the same time. Perhaps, I should wear my nametag or other sign or symbol more often!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sm8aRxRR41w>



March 8

Matthew 6:21 “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

The movie, “Goonies,” released in 1985 continues to be one of my all-time favorites. A group of youngsters chases the dream of treasure and finds a long ago lost pirate ship captained by One-Eye Willy. The plot includes villains, the Fratelli family, who try their best to outsmart the kids. In the end, One-Eye Willy’s treasure appears to be lost and the kids’ hope to save their town fails. Of course, as all movies go, the good guys win in the end and the real treasure are the bonds formed among the kids.

What is your treasure? Bank account? Real estate? Cars? Antiques? As we are reminded many times, none of these earthly “treasures” will follow us at death.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tBAB8XU30hE>



March 9

Deuteronomy 26:1-2 “Once you have entered the land the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, and you take possession of it and are settled there, take some of the early produce of the fertile ground that you have harvested from the land the Lord your God is giving you, and put it in a basket.”

A favorite book of mine is “900 Miles from Nowhere.” This mostly picture book includes early day photos of settlers and land rushers in Nebraska, Kansas, and Oklahoma who headed west to stake out their claims to free land. Most of the grainy photos show families standing in front of sod homes or crudely and quickly built shacks thrown up for protection. As the photography of the day required people to hold still for 10 seconds or so, few of them smile as it is easier to hold a straight face. Their faces are filthy and their clothes are tattered and worn. Many perished, especially when harsh weather set upon them. But they were hardy souls, thankful for what would become their new lives. I often wonder if I could survive such an existence.

Lent asks that we cut back on eating and drinking. Lent asks that we reflect on what God has provided. He asks that, in return, we pay tribute to Him, returning some of what we have gained. That doesn't seem difficult.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k8gAlEaNvG4>

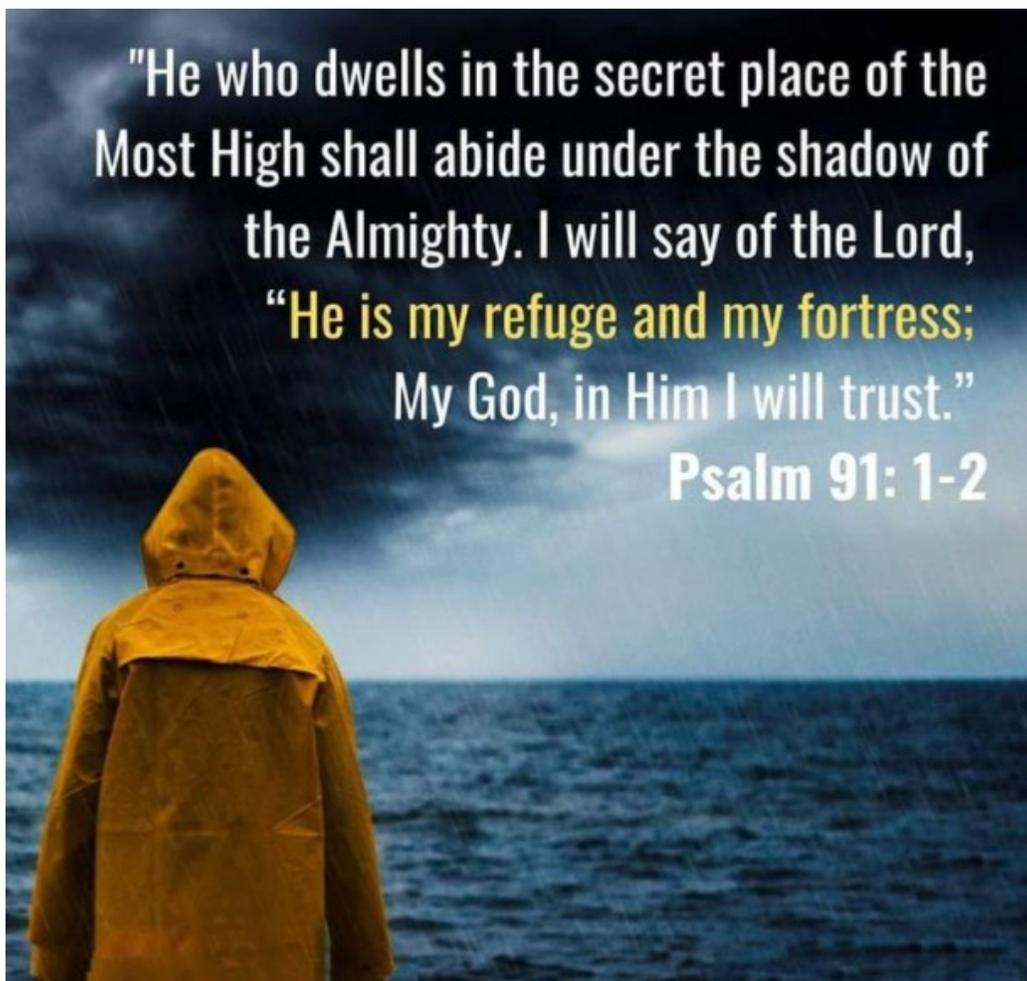


March 10

Psalm 91:1-2 “Living in the Most High’s shelter, camping in the Almighty’s shade, I say to the Lord, ‘You are my refuge, my stronghold! You are my God—the one I trust!’”

In more than 60 years of scouting, I doubt that I can count the number of campouts I have experienced. It may be due to their frightful conditions, but I recall that most of them were in terrible weather. We camped in a field next to the Sunshine Biscuit Company in Kansas City, Kansas where rain flooded several inches around us. We camped near Bonner Springs when 4 inches of snow fell overnight. We camped near Wellsville when storms drove us deep into our sleeping bags. We camped at summer camp when heat rose to triple digits. We camped beside the Arkansas River while rain pounded us and hail stung our faces. We survived, perhaps, because we placed our faith in God.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=67wC6-kWWS0>



"He who dwells in the secret place of the
Most High shall abide under the shadow of
the Almighty. I will say of the Lord,
"He is my refuge and my fortress;
My God, in Him I will trust."
Psalm 91: 1-2

March 11

Romans 10:9 “Because if you confess with your mouth ‘Jesus is Lord’ and in your heart you have faith that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”

Some purport that the eyes can detect truth telling or lying. Those that follow these theories believe that when a response is spoken while the eyes looks down, the speaker is attempting to retrieve an answer previously learned kinesthetically. When the eyes took to one side or the other, the speaker may be searching for an answer learned auditorily. When the eyes look upward and to the left, the speaker is searching the brain’s files for information stored through linguistic means; however, when looking upward and to the right, the speaker is creating a response (lie). Much remains to be learned from these speculations and many doubt their authenticity.

What happens when we say, “Jesus is Lord,” but we have not yet accepted Jesus as our personal savior? Our actions and our words do not match and we may not yet be destined for eternal life with Him.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JjYEGR5Nfb4>



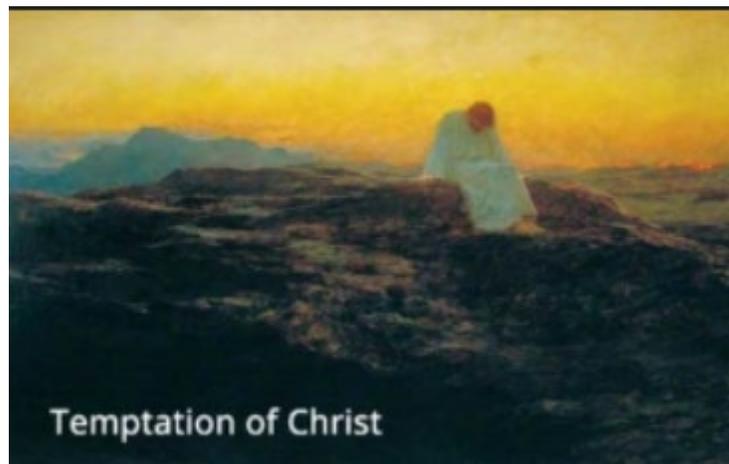
March 12

Luke 4:13 “After finishing every temptation, the devil departed from Him until the next opportunity.”

“The devil made me do it!” You may recall comedian Flip Wilson’s impersonation of Geraldine, a sassy young woman who couldn’t seem to resist doing things she shouldn’t. When she bought a dress, she would reply, “The devil made me do it.”

Faced with what seems like a constant flow of temptations, do you submit or do you resist? The devil tempted Jesus and He resisted. Can we only be like Him!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cJQaEiUQ5xo>



March 14

Genesis 15:13 “Then the Lord said to Abram, ‘Have no doubt that your descendants will live as immigrants in a land that isn’t their own, where they will be oppressed slaves for four hundred years.’”

From the earliest of times until now, the migration of people has continued. In each century since Abram’s time, people traveled to new places, some to find promised fortunes, others to escape dangers. In 2006, a group of us went south of the U.S. border to see for ourselves what some immigrants experienced. As we filled water stations in the Sonoran desert and picked up belongings left behind, none of us could imagine the dangers these travelers faced. Now that immigrants are coming from Afghanistan, we see yet another test of our will as Christians to ease the oppression they certainly encounter.

If we trace our own heritage, few can say our ancestors didn’t come as immigrants to a new world. Abram received God’s assurance that his descendants would flourish. We have the challenge to see that today’s immigrants flourish as well.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NNxuukP6mgU>



March 15

Psalm 27:14 “Hope in the Lord! Be Strong! Let your heart take courage! Hope in the Lord!”

This will be hard to write. The pain of losing a child is still present. The years have passed, but the memories of days and nights waiting for a glimmer of progress remain. As the messages from doctors continued, the one thing that never faded was hope. And when the end came, hope turned its focus to hope for peace. How can one live without hope?

Jesus faced pain, ridicule, and death. But hope for salvation continued. Travel through these dark days of Lent focused on the hope that lives in the Lord.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T56yi_XZl9c



March 16

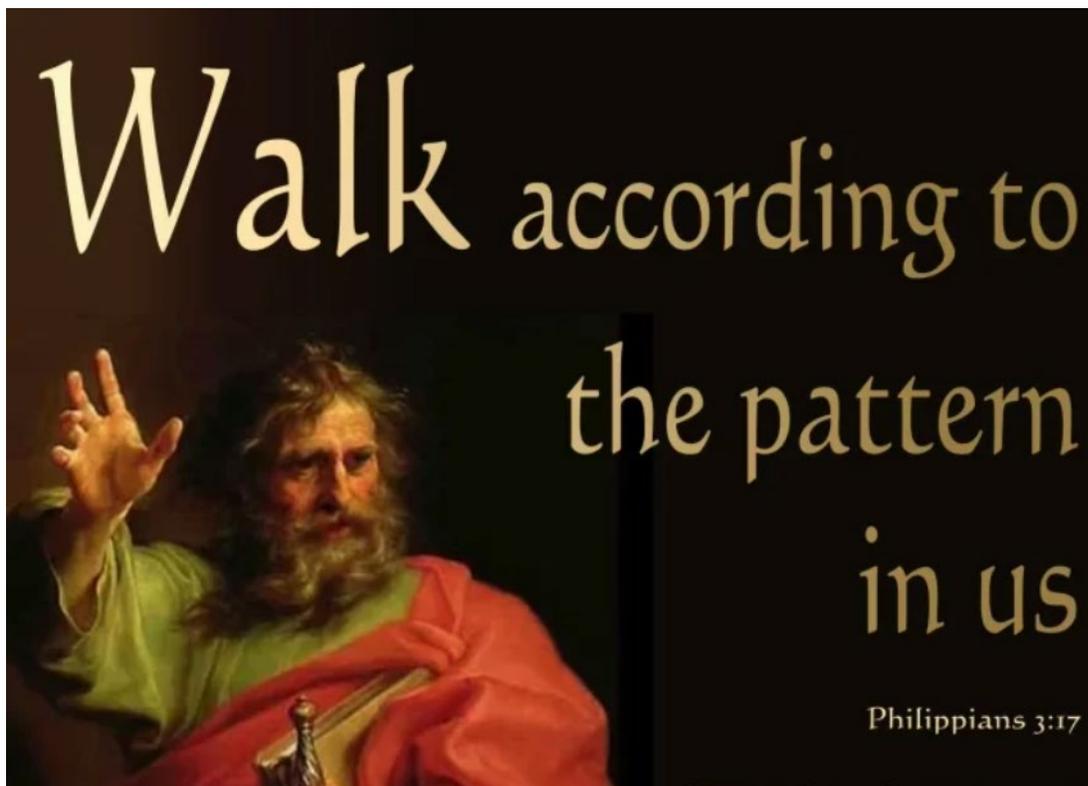
Philippians 3:17 “Brothers and sisters, become imitators of me and watch those who live this way—you can use us as models.”

Researcher George Land described human development in three stages: Accretion, in which individuals need continuing care and support (think infants and toddlers); Replication, in which individuals dress alike, talk alike, speak alike, and act alike (think teenagers); and Transformation, in which individuals move out of the norm to become creative and artistic (think inventors). The world wouldn't grow and develop without those in the Transformation stage; however, most of us are more comfortable being followers, joining clubs, repeating oaths and promises of various organizations.

Paul sought to develop the church at Philippi with this message, that followers should do and act like him and his supporters. His life was, as much as was possible, a model of his Savior, Jesus. Now, there is nothing wrong with being creative and going a new way. In the Presbyterian Church (USA), a movement is underway to develop New Worshipping Communities that share little resemblance to more traditional churches. Most of us, though, are comfortable with the known, participating with family and friends in congregations that have established histories.

Regardless of your intent or desire to follow Jesus, use Him as your model.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4r8XfE_VNb0



March 17

Luke 13:35 “...Blessings on the one who comes in the Lord’s name.”

You’ve likely heard the saying that religion and politics should never be mixed. In my writings, I try to heed to that warning; however, when I read the scripture above, which is attributed to Jesus as He speaks to the Pharisees, I can’t help but recall the scene that takes place each year in the U.S. House of Representatives during the State of the Union address by the President. The Sergeant at Arms steps through the door and loudly announces that the President is about to enter. Then, as the President makes his way to the front of the room to take the podium, he makes his way through the gaggle of men and women, shaking hands, smiling, and greeting as he goes. The crowd is amicable and cheerful as this annual event is carried out. All the while, though, there are many who aren’t quite so kind, for they will not applaud as the President delivers his address.

The Pharisees are somewhat like these Congressional members. They don’t like that Jesus has raised a following and made statements that run counter to theirs. The threats to their power are evident. Jesus knows His mission, though. He understands that God’s purpose for His Son is to bring about a new church. In the first part of the passage above, He warns them, “Look, your house is abandoned. You won’t see me until the time comes when you say, ‘Blessings on the one who comes in the Lord’s name.’”

We are reminded now during Lent of that time.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fEppvdgL1no>



March 18

Luke 9:35 “Then a voice from the cloud said, ‘This is my chosen one. Listen to Him!’”

Fog machines. If you’ve never experienced one, you have missed a joy in life. In one of my principal assignments, a purchase order landed on my desk from a teacher/sponsor of the school’s drama club. At the time, I had no experience with fog machines, so I asked a few questions and learned that the play called for a gently rolling and thin fog along the floor of the stage. Sounded harmless! When the production was about to begin its first performance, the curtains opened to a stage completely filled with fog. No low-lying, rolling fog on the stage floor. The audience of mostly parents and grandparents got quite a kick out of it as the cast attempted to deliver their lines unseen for the first five minutes or so. Apparently, when setting up the fog machine that had performed perfectly during practice, somehow the intensity dial was turned up to the high setting. Voices from the cloud!

Peter, John, and James witnessed the event on the mountain when Jesus was transformed during his meeting with Moses and Elijah. They heard the voice from the cloud proclaiming that Jesus was God’s chosen one. In complete shock, they spoke to no one about what they saw.

Not so with our fog machine. The story of voices from the cloud was told and retold many times.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wrlsy8aqFyE>



March 19

Isaiah 55:1 “All of you who are thirsty, come to the water!”

The news carries unsettling announcements that water sources are growing scarce. The largest aquifer in the world stretches across eight states from South Dakota and Wyoming south to Nebraska, Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Texas. Water from the Ogallala Aquifer is drawn to support agriculture, provide for cattle, and human consumption. As water levels recede in the aquifer, alternatives are being made that will, hopefully, extend and sustain this vital source.

Who is this water that Isaiah speaks of? If it isn't the Son of God, then who else might it be? Does your soul ache for relief? Your soul will be assuaged by Jesus, the water of life.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QTZj5FJMuMI>



March 21

Psalm 63:1 “God! My God! It’s you—I search for You! My whole being thirsts for you! My body desires you in a dry and tired land, no water anywhere.

Imagine our lives without available water. When our crew went to Nogales, Mexico in 2006 and we stayed with families in the slums of the colonias, a truck came through the dusty roads, honking its horn to alert people that water was available. Their ramshackle houses all had a large container of some sort on the roofs and the water truck filled those needing to purchase it. Water was a precious commodity that no one could live without.

Jesus is the water David longs for. He thirsts for what God has promised, a Messiah. His life is not fulfilled without the Holy presence.

Is your life fulfilled? Is Jesus in it?

The link below is another rendition of the wonderful “Isaiah Song” from yesterday. Enjoy!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iDEB-Jn06qQ>



March 22

1 Corinthians 10:13 “No temptation has seized you that isn’t common for people. But God is faithful. He won’t allow you to be tempted beyond your abilities. Instead, with the temptation, God will also supply a way out, so that you will be able to endure it.”

In 1972, a Stanford professor conducted a study in which young children were offered a small reward immediately or two small rewards later if they could only wait. Known as the Marshmallow Test, delayed gratification was gauged. Could the child resist eating the first marshmallow with the promise that by waiting, a better reward would be gained. Of course, a child’s eating a marshmallow is not a sin, but much was learned about human behavior when faced with temptation.

Paul’s message to the church at Corinth spoke of sin as being common and ordinary, similar to that faced by mankind down through the generations. Paul told the followers that our God is still for us. He loves us and is not waiting for us to fail. He is ready to help us. One way that He helps believers is to actively work in our lives to keep us from ever being tempted beyond what we can resist. We might not always believe we can overcome temptation. Some temptations seem irresistible, but God promises that we can resist with in the power of the Holy Spirit.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ewv2PWmUtdM>



March 23

Luke 13:4b “Do you think that they were more guilty of wrongdoing than everyone else who lives in Jerusalem?”

Rabbi Harold S. Kushner wrote a best seller in 1981, “Why Do Bad Things Happen to Good People?” His book was written several years after learning that his age 3 year old son bore a disease that would end his life in his early teen years. The book stands as a critically helpful support to those grieving the loss of a loved one. In those times when a child is gone, a parent or grandparent is struck down, a sudden accident takes the life of a dear friend, we all wonder, “Why me?” “What have they done or what have I done to deserve this?” “I surely must have sinned against God.” “I am certainly the only one who has suffered loss like this.”

Jesus relates to some of His followers that no one is to blame, no one is being punished. We all face times when a loss seems unjust and unfair. To put His words into today’s vernacular, “That’s life!” God does not punish us for sins by causing harm. When an airliner falls from the sky taking hundreds of lives; when a car strikes another taking the lives of those onboard; when the Twin Towers are struck and fall crushing thousands...no one was more guilty of wrongdoing. God doesn’t work that way.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xKQULTnaI8>



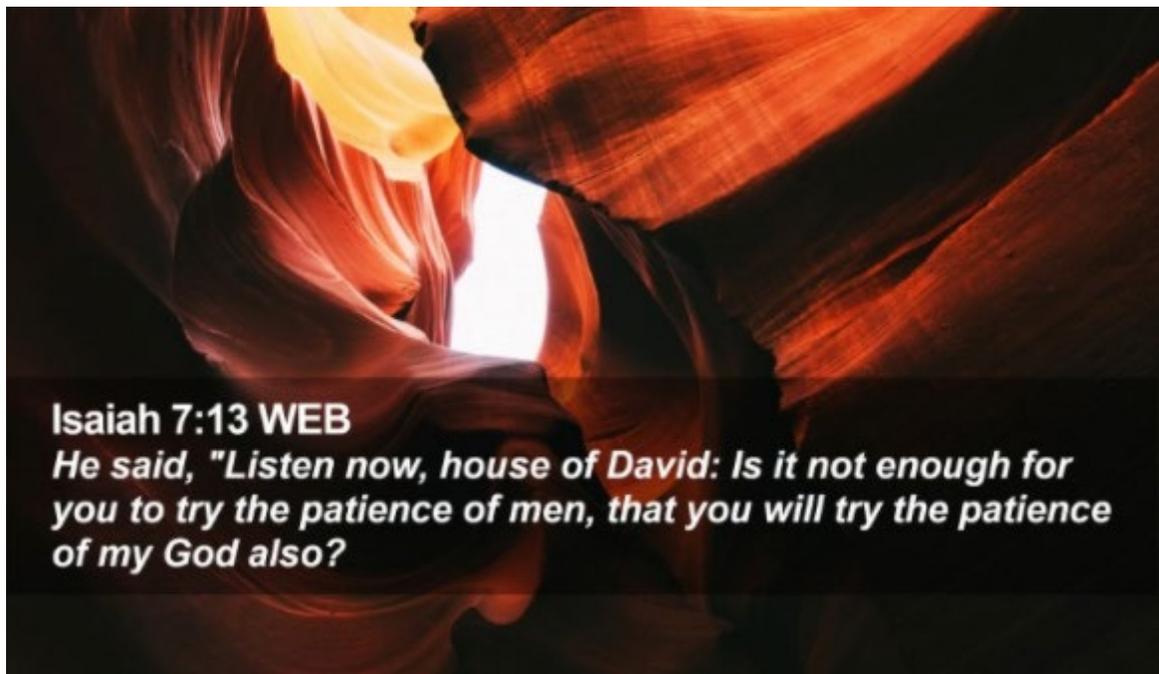
March 24

Isaiah 7:13 “Then Isaiah said, “Listen, house of David! Isn’t it enough for you to be tiresome for people that you are also tiresome before my God?”

Wait! I thought it was the season of Lent. Why are we considering a scripture passage usually seen during Advent before Christ’s birth? The prophet Isaiah foretold the birth of the Holy One 700 years before the event. Generation after generation had heard that God would deliver on His promise. But generation after generation continued to be disappointed that nothing happened. Isaiah told Ahaz, king of Israel at that time that he, too, must be patient. What would our attitude be if we were told that God would respond, but that 700 years would pass before anything took place? We have a hard time imagining next year much less the year 2722! I can trace my ancestor, Heinrich Frey, who came to America in 1685, a mere 337 years ago. I am certain Heinrich could not imagine me much less what would come in twice that time.

So, it’s patience that God wants from us. Can you be patient or would you, too, fail the Marshmallow Test?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D04G-XrvACA>



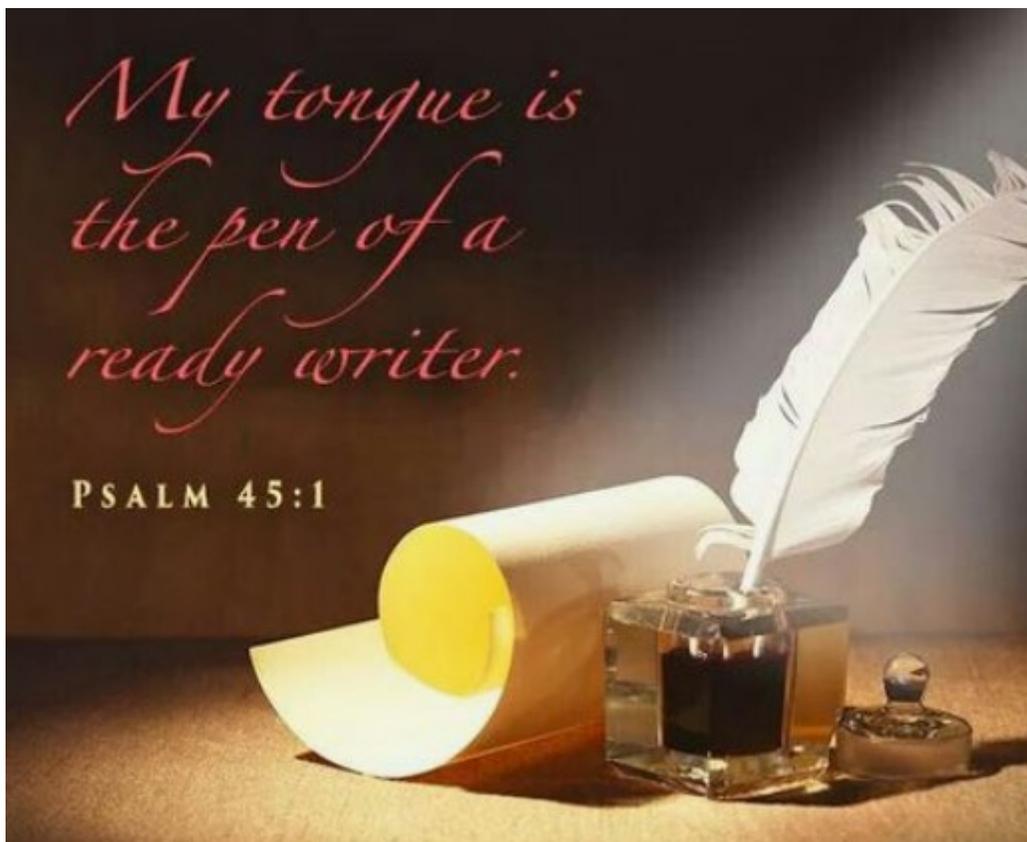
March 25

Psalm 45:1 “My tongue is the pen of a skillful scribe.”

I am always interested in expanding my vocabulary and was especially interested in the word “amanuensis” when I ran across it in the biography of Andrew Jackson. Later, I read the word in the writings of Adam Hamilton (Church of the Resurrection) regarding Paul’s letters. Seems both Andrew Jackson and Paul the Apostle dictated to a scribe who recorded what was spoken. Throughout time and until modern days, most were uneducated and unable to read or write. Others were extremely busy and depended on a scribe who was literate. The word amanuensis has long ago slipped into obscurity, but the practice of recording the spoken word remains with us today; however, we use recording devices into which we speak.

The antiquities of lost scrolls found and interpreted are major scores for archeologists and scholars. I wonder how technology will treat these electronic recordings centuries later?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lcX-aTibxQ>



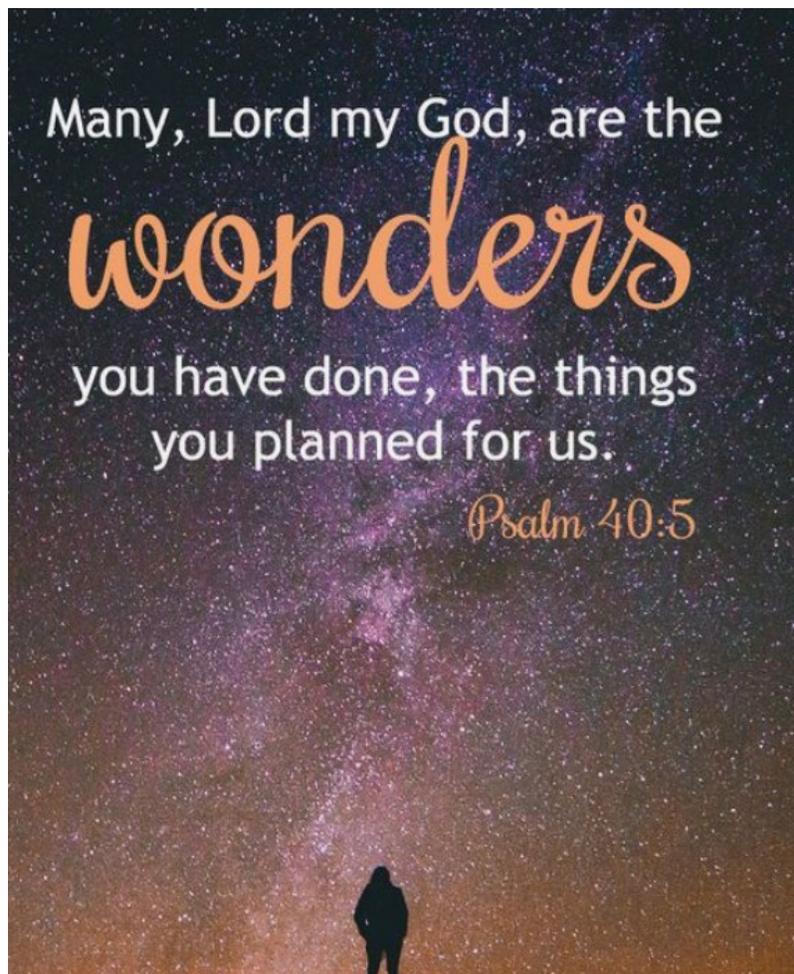
March 26

Psalm 40:5 “You, Lord my God! You’ve done so many things—your wonderful deeds and your plans for us—no one can compare with you!”

As a Vietnam Veteran and a lifetime member of the Vietnam Veterans Association of America, I receive an ample supply of mail most would consider junk mail. One particularly interesting piece is a catalog of items that includes caps, t-shirts, and other memorabilia marketed to veterans. Also included are the various medals and badges that veterans can purchase along with shadow boxes in which displays can be assembled. Veterans are most often proud of their service and enjoy reliving the better parts through the medals awarded to them. Of course, there are the stories that circulate about “glory thieves” who purchase these paraphernalia even though they didn’t earn them. I’m always tickled by the “South American General Syndrome” folks whose chests are covered with honors.

I wonder what God’s shadow box would look like?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=26RFQqFMI3Q>



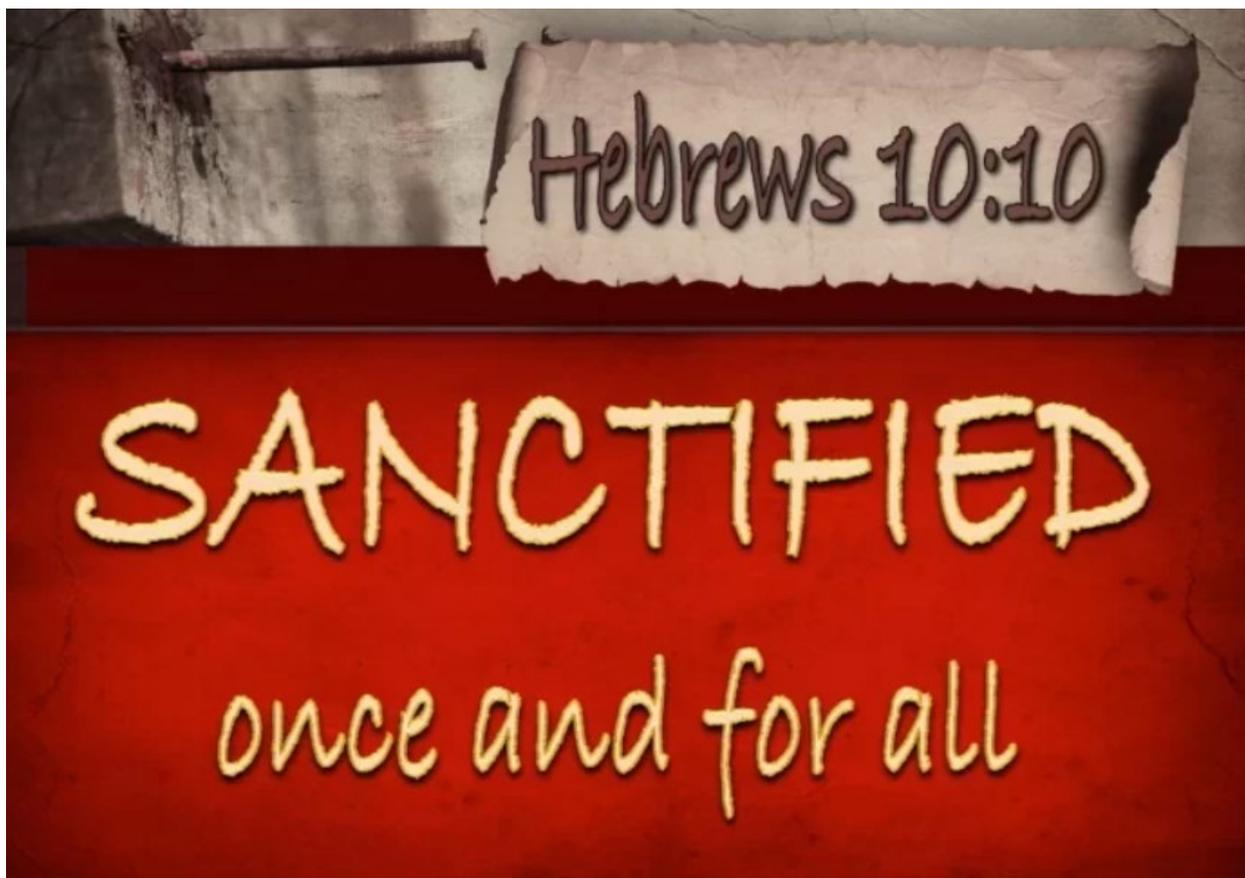
March 28

Hebrews 10:10 “We have been made holy by God’s will through the offering of Jesus Christ’s body once for all.”

So there it is. No more lambs, no more goats, no more pigeons or anything to be sacrificed to please God. Bible experts think the animal blood sacrifices were only a temporary measure that God put in as a placeholder until Jesus died “once for all.” Animal sacrifices were never able to fully cleanse people from sin. Hebrews 9:8-10 reminds us they couldn’t change us from the inside either. God’s new covenant was a promise to be in each person’s heart and mind. Animal sacrifices were offered again and again, but Jesus’ sacrifice brought what animal blood couldn’t — “once for all.”

Sanctification comes only by the blood of Christ.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M0bTn_ZXExE



March 29

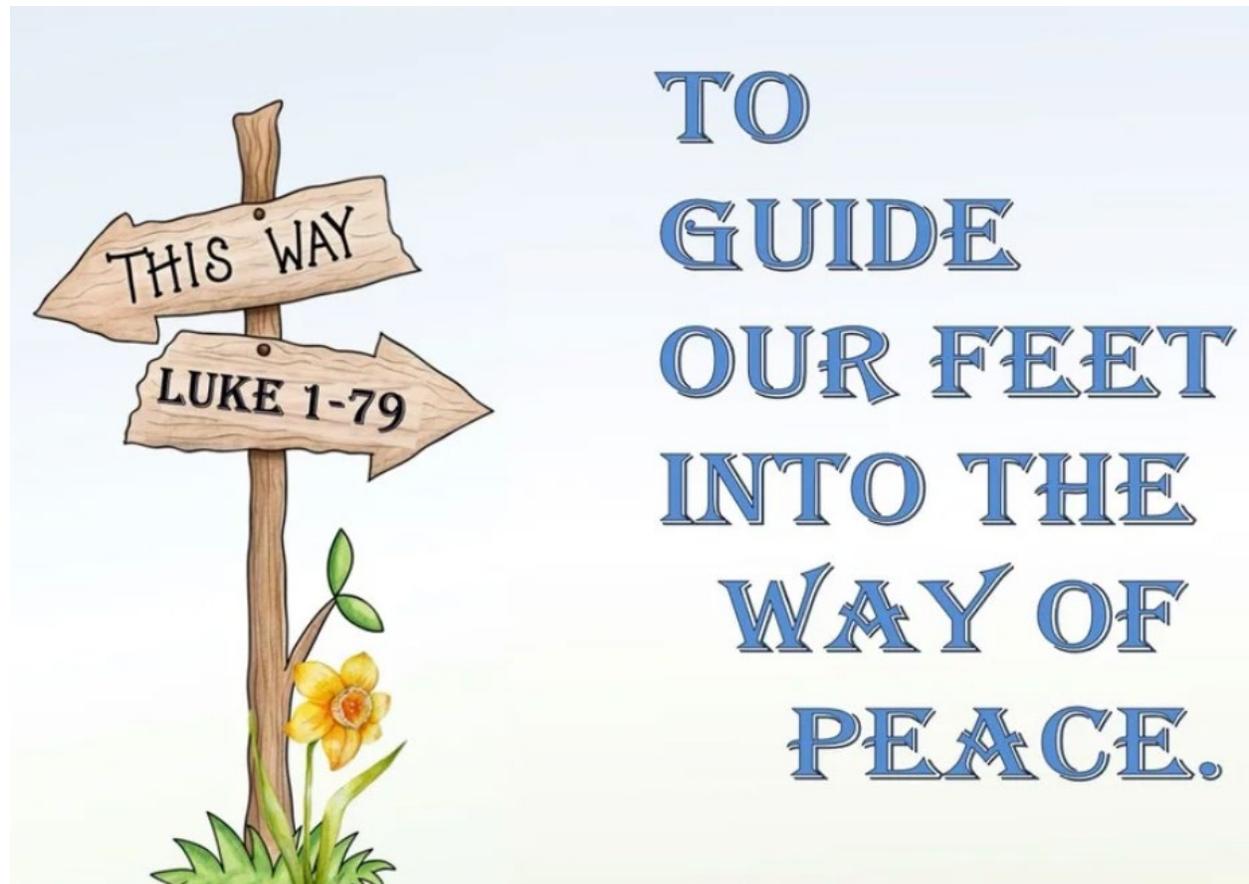
Luke 1:1 “...God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a city in Galilee...”

If you haven't watched the 2016 movie “Angels in Our Midst,” you might want to find it on one of the streaming services. The movie is the story of a middle school outcast boy who is traumatized by the tragic death of his parents on 9/11. Tobey Marshall finds confidence and comfort in his relationship with a guardian angel. The guardian angel is the only one in whom Tobey can place his trust

Movies and literature include many other stories of angels who appear. Jimmy Stewart's Christmas favorite, “It's a Wonderful Life” is another such movie in which an angel appears to walk alongside someone grappling with overwhelming problems.

If the virgin Mary could be visited by the angel Gabriel, is it possible that the fictional world of the movies might be reality? Could angels be in our presence to help us and guide us without our realizing who they are?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rHH66eVC1x8>



March 30

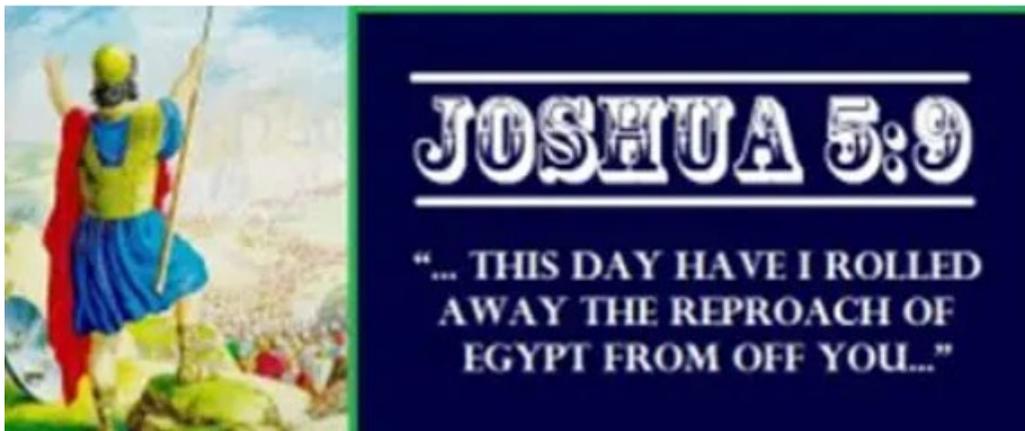
Joshua 5:9 “Then the Lord said to Joshua, ‘Today I have rolled away from you the disgrace of Egypt.’”

If you enjoy movies from the World War II genre like I do, you probably have watched scenes in which Jewish men were challenged by Nazi soldiers to drop their trousers to determine whether they were circumcised or not. The age-old practice was the seal of the covenant with God to remind His people that they were different than all others.

God’s deliverance of the Israelites out of Egypt brought deliverance for God’s covenant people that included the promise they would inherit the land, a land of abundance (Deut. 8:8-9). Their new beginning in a new life under Joshua’s leadership meant they no longer had to fear being tormented because they were different than their captors. The practice of circumcision could begin again, not only to remember the seal of God’s covenant, but to again set themselves apart as the people of God.

In today’s world, all who believe in God’s everlasting power and grace bow before Him.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WKheRmngu9Q>



March 31

Psalm 32:5 “So I admitted my sin to you; I didn’t conceal my guilt. ‘I’ll confess my sins to the Lord’ is what I said, then you removed the guilt from my sin.”

Confession is an interesting concept. For those of the Catholic faith, spending time in the confessional is an expectation. For Protestants, confessions can take the form of proclamations that state beliefs, assertions, and declarations such as the Belhar Confession states several beliefs and rejections of doctrine and theology as adopted by the Presbyterian Church (USA). Googling “confession” brings up a bevy of films and books about the subject. On the humorous side, Chunk, a character in the movie, “Goonies,” confesses under threat of physical harm to his shortcomings in 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade plus lots more.

Here in Lent only two weeks before Easter, it may be appropriate to consider easing what David spoke when he said, “When I kept quiet, my bones wore out; I was groaning all day long—every day, every night! — because your hand was heavy upon me” (Psalm 32:4-5).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7UwSPMflaNA>



April 1

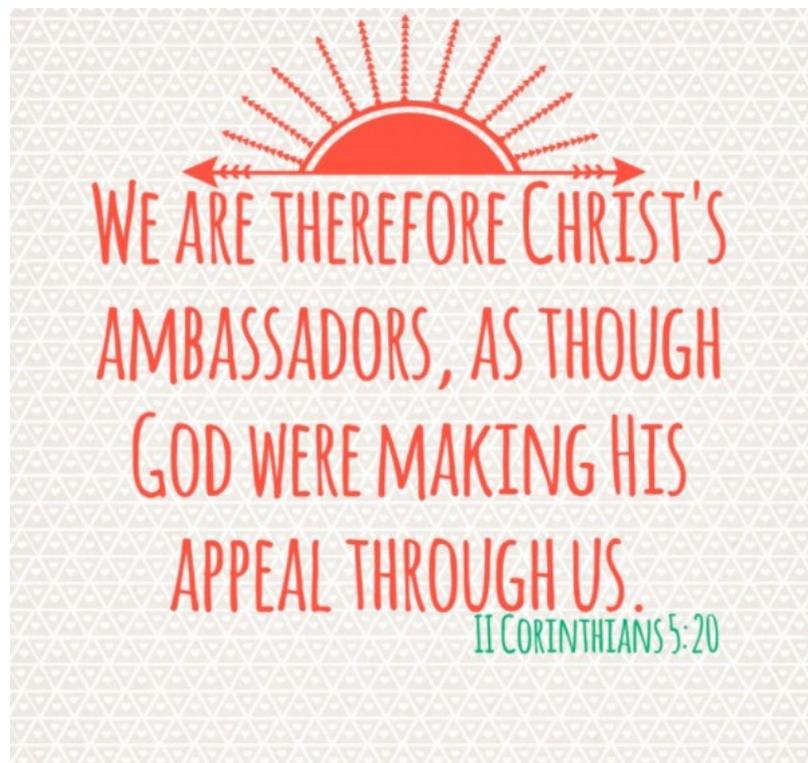
2 Corinthians 5:20 "So we are ambassadors who represent Christ."

A few years ago, I was asked to form a team of adult scouters to recruit others to participate in training courses offered at the BSA Philmont Reservation in northeast New Mexico. Remembering my time as a PR director for a school district, I gathered together handout materials and videos that could be displayed at an information booth. In those earlier days in PR work, I had entered the South Kansas City Chamber of Commerce's annual information fair at what was then the fully enclosed Ward Parkway Mall. For 3 years in a row, I was awarded "Best Booth" at the event, so assembling this time was easy. In addition to dispensing information about the Philmont Training Center, I was also charged with putting together a team of ambassadors, for it was impossible for me to spread myself across the Heart of America Council. In time, a group of 7 others came forward with the same love for Philmont I had all these years.

In the formation of the early church, Jesus sent out His disciples to spread the Word of Christianity. Others, like Paul, came along to carry on His work. Down through the ages, missionaries are sent out to bring God's Word to all people.

We are ambassadors for Christ. Help spread His Word.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sm8aRxRR41w>



April 2

Luke 15:1-3 “All the tax collectors and sinners were gathering around Jesus to listen to Him. The Pharisees and legal experts were grumbling, saying, ‘This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.’”

Many have served at the KCK hot lunch program at the Gill Center or other similar volunteer opportunities. Whether spooning hot food onto trays, handing out tickets, wiping down tables, or washing trays and dishes, it isn't easy to escape the fragrance that hangs in the room. Bodies that aren't bathed regularly and clothing that is worn day and night is unpleasant at best. But it comes with the territory in serving those in need.

Jesus surrounded Himself with these “undesirables.” Some were well-off while others were in need. The Pharisees were certainly not needy, but criticized Jesus for getting close to them.

Lent is an even better time to come close to those in need. There are many ways to serve whether at a hot lunch center or contributing clothing or giving to the panhandler on the corner.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8E4VVa-dxgA>



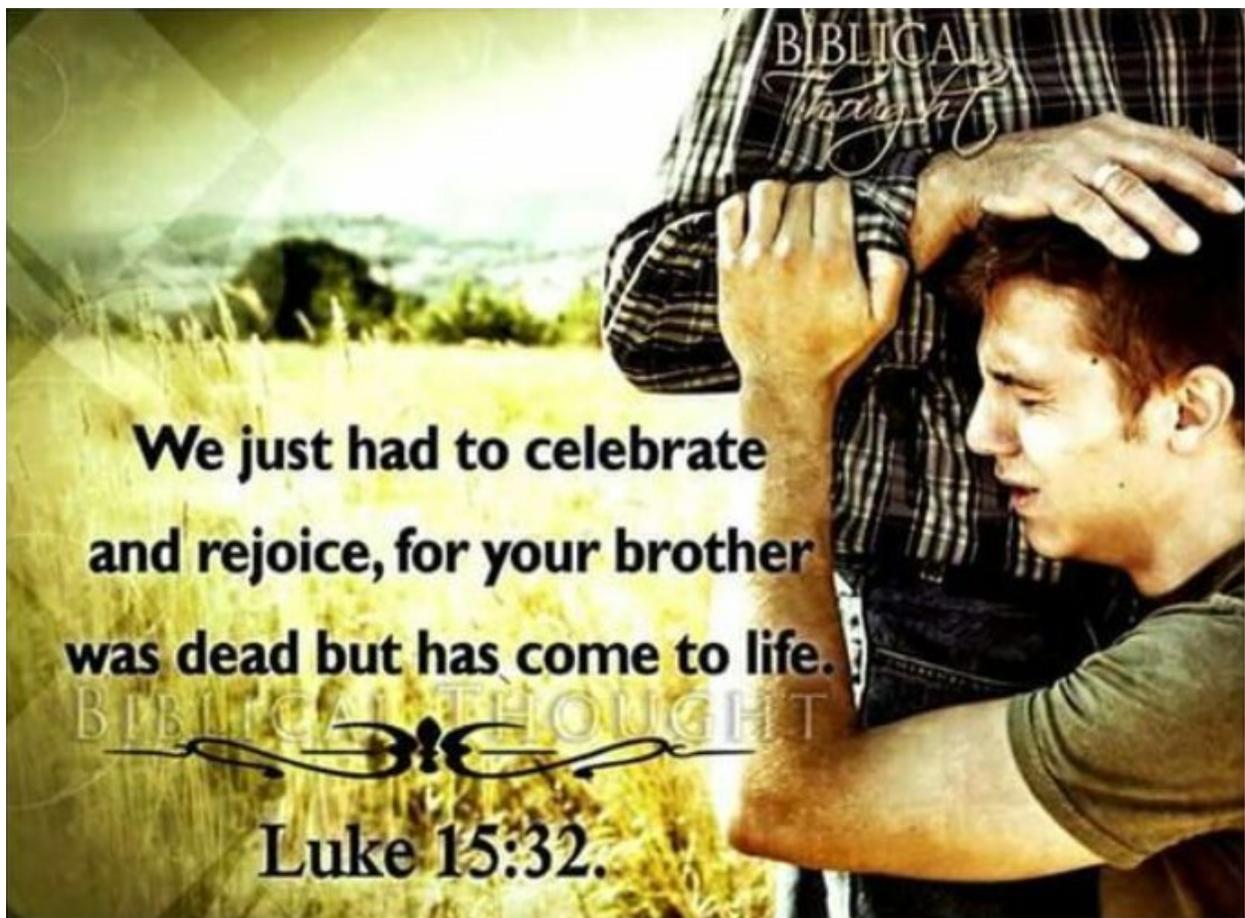
April 4

Luke 15:32 "He was lost and is found."

A bunkmate of mine in Saigon spent much of his off-duty time down on the streets, drinking and chasing women. When his tour ended, he decided to remain in country and, over time, I lost contact with him. Several years later, I received a letter from him saying that he had come home to his family in Massachusetts. He was regretful for what he had done and how he had lived, and he was ecstatic about his family's reception of him even though they knew what he had been doing. They were just glad to have him home. His letter also told about his disappointment that close friends before he left for the war had abandoned him in that time when veterans weren't heralded.

The story of the prodigal son is a familiar one. Regardless of his shortcomings, the father celebrates the return of his son. Jesus tells this story to remind us that all isn't lost even though we choose paths less desired by God. He welcomes us back.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LhHdaKWgKZc>



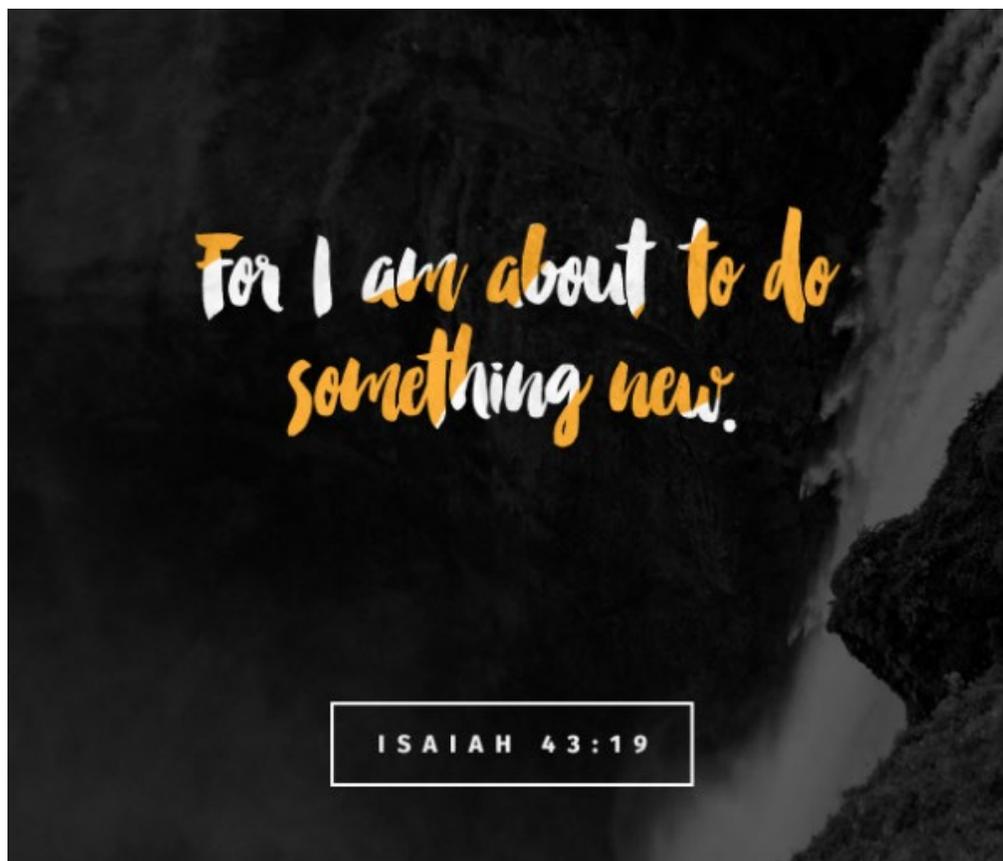
April 5

Isaiah 43:19 “I’m making a way in the desert, paths in the wilderness.”

A colleague in my office recently went with a group of friends to hike a portion of the Appalachian Trail. She posted photos of their adventures which brought back memories of my own hiking part of the AT. She spoke about how difficult it was, that the trail took them up and down steep hills in North Carolina. I could tell from her photos that she was in the same area my scout group had hiked years before along the North Carolina-Tennessee border. When the AT was first established, planners were more concerned about connecting water sources than about the gradient of the trails. A good day’s hike would take travelers from one spring to another with 6-10 miles between. Other trails we had hiked in New Mexico, Colorado, and Wyoming were cut using switchbacks, purposeful twists and hairpins that decreased the ascent or descent, making it easier to traverse.

God had a plan. He would bring about a new world for His people. The wilderness would bring forth life-giving sustenance, nourished by water. That water would be the promise of the covenant that formed the relationship between Himself and His people. His promise holds today.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yDyQWdzt_L8



April 6

Psalm 126:6 “Let those who go out, crying and carrying their seed, come home with joyful shouts, carrying bales of grain!”

What will you sow today and what will you reap tomorrow? Will you scatter kindness as you go through the day? Will the seeds of loving fall on fertile ground? Will you share hope with others? Will your abundance become a part of those who are in need?

From these seeds, you will be joyful.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ggua188TD64>



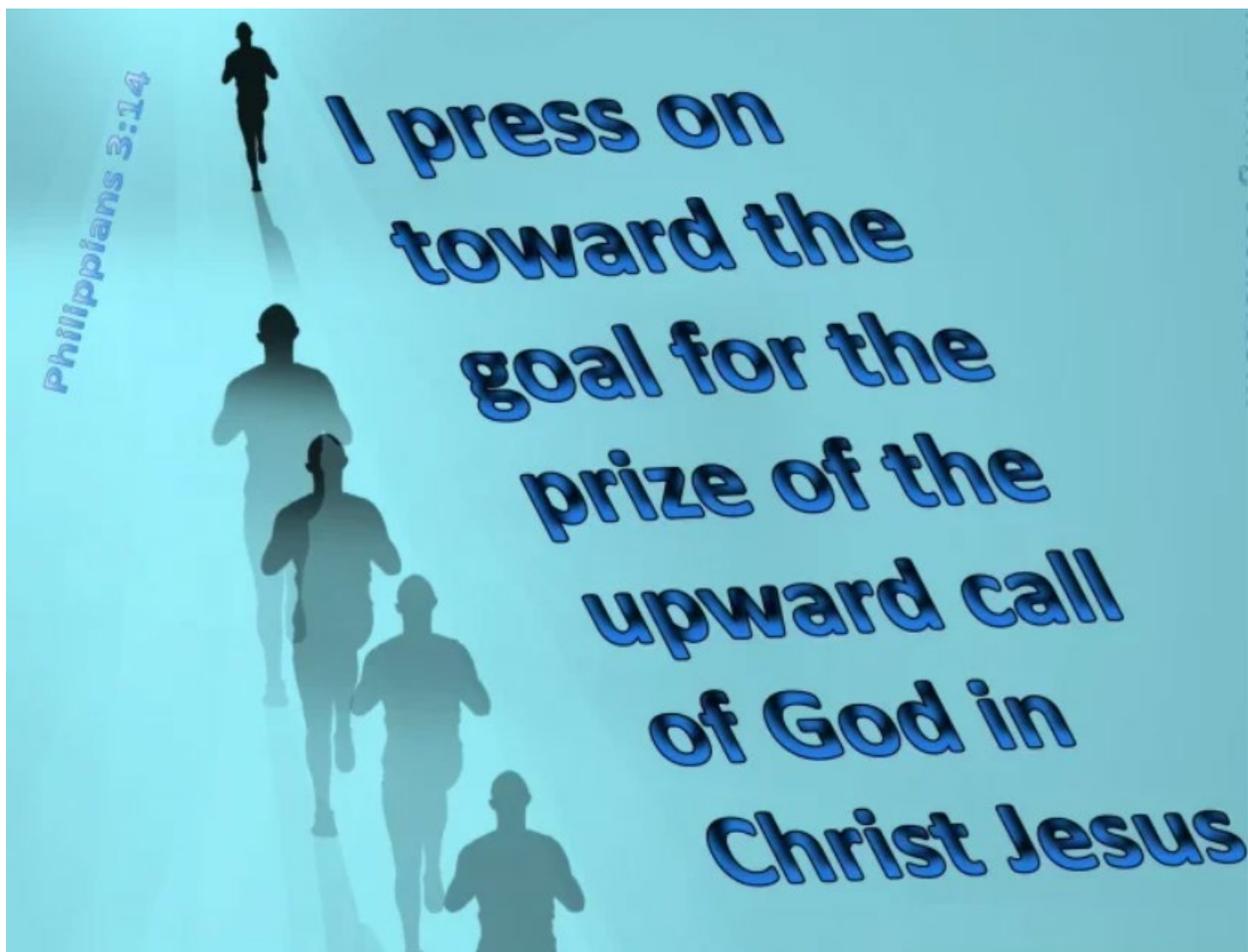
April 7

Philippians 3:14 “The goal I pursue is the prize of God’s upward call in Christ Jesus.”

We all have goals. I recall my first teaching contract in 1966 when I earned \$100 a week. I thought I was rich! Of course, choosing a career in education meant that money wasn’t my primary goal. Wasn’t then and still isn’t. Imagine, though, living on \$100 and having money left over! A hamburger at Smaks was less than 20 cents and I could fill up the tank of my VW bug for under \$8.

Nowadays, when I have grown old, my goals are certainly much different. Nowadays, when debts have been paid and there isn’t much I need, my goals have become much more like Paul’s goals. Paul says, “It’s not that I have already reached this goal or have already been perfected, but I pursue it, so that I may grab hold of it because Christ grabbed hold of me for just this purpose (v. 12).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GMCBSzt4tmw>



April 8

John 12:8 “You will always have the poor among you, but you won’t always have Me.”

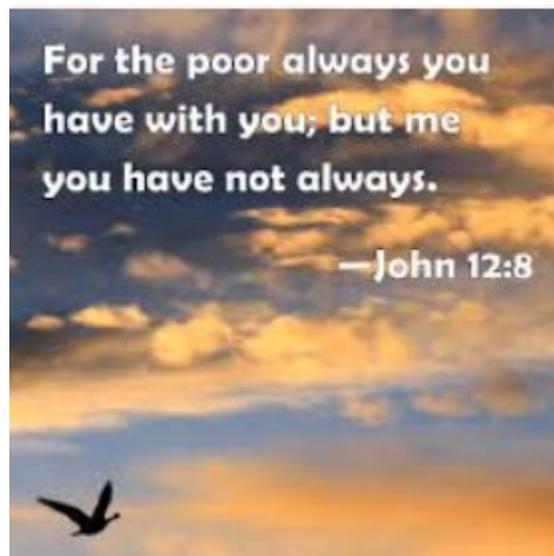
The wealthiest man in the world, Elon Musk, stated he would donate \$6 billion to end hunger around the world. Perhaps, you recall the story from last fall when the U.N. Hunger Chief responded with a plea that billionaires’ donations could go a long way toward the goal. At the point of this writing, no money has been forthcoming.

Judas taunted Jesus when Mary, sister of Martha and Lazarus, used a large amount of perfume to wash His feet. Judas stated that the value of the perfume would go a long way toward feeding the poor. Now, 2000+ years later, the poor are still among us and Jesus was right. The poor are hungry while the rich get richer.

I am in no way comparing billionaires to Judas; however, those of us who want to do something to ease the poor’s lot usually do step up. Lent is an even better time to do so.

Enjoy this reenactment of these events in the life of Jesus.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jKiixUyr7E&t=3s>



April 9

Psalm 118:1 “Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, because His faithful love lasts forever.”

Two thoughts stand out in this passage. The first is “faithful love.” What is love if it isn’t faithful? Some speak of unconditional love, that adoration that knows no bounds, that does not waiver, that continues regardless of what may take place. God loves us unconditionally. He loves us so much that He was willing to sacrifice His Son to take away our sins. That is unconditional love.

The second thought is expressed by the word “forever.” We often think of our lives on Earth as having a beginning and an ending. That’s not forever. God promises eternal life with Him in Heaven. That is forever.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BcEr9OkFP-s>



April 11

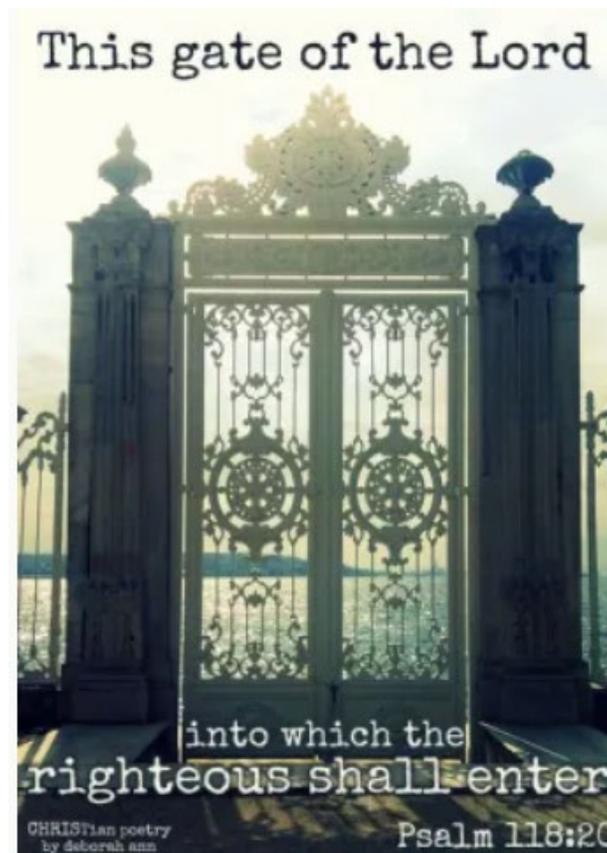
Psalm 118:20 “This is the Lord’s gate; those who are righteous enter through it.”

As a young staff member at the BSA’s Camp Theodore Naish near Bonner Spring, Kansas, I watched as visitors came to camp for the weekly sessions each Wednesday night. A week away for most boys wasn’t too long for there to be separation anxiety; however, the visitors’ night was probably more important for demonstrating the camping program and encouraging donations. A more significant part of the evening for staff members and older campers was a meeting of the Tamegonit Lodge of the Order of the Arrow honorary camping society. In those earlier times, hazing wasn’t frowned upon as it is today, so staff members engaged in it to some extent when campers gathered at the gate of the council ring. Not knowing the password and handshake caused campers to be put aside and denied entrance through the gate until someone spoke up for each one.

Interestingly, Heaven is often described as a gate staffed by St. Peter, a righteous individual in his own way, who checks to see if the newly arrived individual is worthy of entrance.

Certainly, God allows His people, those who are righteous, to enter into His gate. We will have to wait to see if St. Peter is there and whether our credits from our earthly lives warrant passage.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JUxynAUY11k>

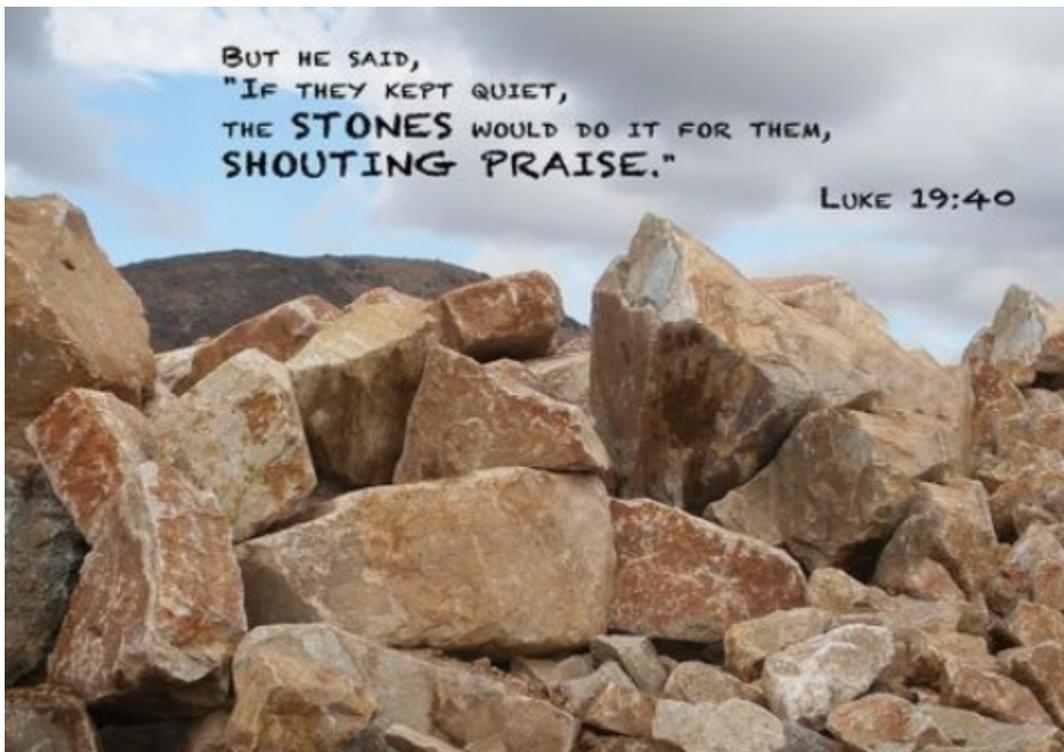


April 12

Luke 19:40 "I tell you, if they were silent, the stones would shout."

Movie buffs may have seen the 2014 production, "Noah," starring Russell Crowe in which God chooses Noah to build an ark and fill it with his family and breeding pairs of all living creatures. In preparation for the coming flood, giant rock creatures help Noah build the ark. These rock creatures, called Watchers, are said to derive from the Nephilim of the Book of Genesis and be thought of as human-angel hybrids, also referred to in the Book of Enoch in the Torah. After saving Noah and his family and menagerie of animals, the giant Watchers sacrifice themselves to the throngs of people, all who perish in the flood. Without understanding their origin, viewers of these rock creatures might consider the movie pure science fiction. But in their own way, these stone creatures shouted.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=srASkz6PU_0



April 13

Isaiah 50:9 “Look, they will wear out like clothing; the moth will eat them.”

At a recent volunteering opportunity, I sorted clothing donations for Uplift, an organization that provides food, clothing, blankets, and toiletries to the homeless. Rather than requiring individuals in need to come to a center to pick up needed items, Uplift vans make several trips each week to homeless encampments around the city. As the Rotary team I was with emptied bag after bag of donations, I couldn't help but notice the condition of some of the items we were placing in sorting bins. Uplift quotes from 2 Corinthians 8:14 on their website: “At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. The goal is equality.” Much of the donated clothing seemed worn. A few pieces had holes and were discarded. I wondered what the donors thought and who it was they considered wearing such worn out clothing.

Jesus is about to fulfill His mission and, unlike others, He has stayed the course. He has not faltered nor has He worn out. His servant example lives strong for us.

You may recall this song by Chandler Moore from March 19. Enjoy the song this time with an interpretive freestyle dance.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AuE-gYlcmE8>

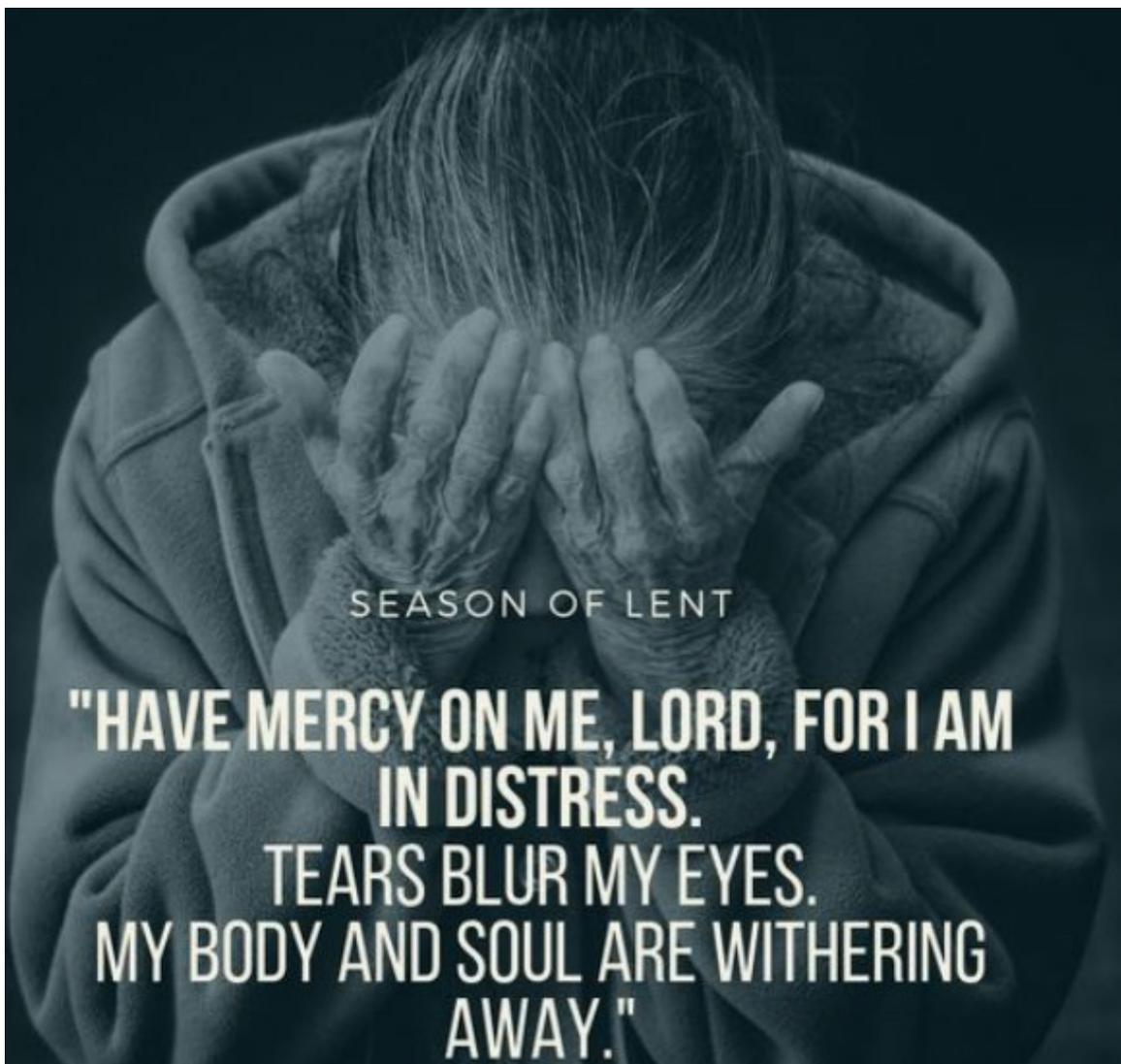


April 14 Maundy Thursday

Psalm 31:9 "Have mercy on me, Lord, because I'm depressed. My vision fails because of my grief, as do my spirit and my body."

We've come a long way through the season of Lent and now, arriving at Maundy Thursday, we face the dark times of Jesus' crucifixion. The Last Supper is served and Jesus washes the feet of His disciples. There is little about which to be joyful, for the arrest and what is to follow must weigh heavily on all who were present. The disciples and even Judas must all be depressed, for they don't yet understand the significance of the events about to unfold. They don't yet understand how their roles as Jesus told them are about to take place. Depression must hang heavy in the Upper Room and gloom must be in the air.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ILehPZnjfM>



SEASON OF LENT

**"HAVE MERCY ON ME, LORD, FOR I AM
IN DISTRESS.
TEARS BLUR MY EYES.
MY BODY AND SOUL ARE WITHERING
AWAY."**

April 15 Good Friday

Philippians 2:8 “He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death.”

When I read many words in scripture, I often think about how they are used in other parts of my life. The concept of “obedience” is one of those words. Raised in the Boy Scout program, I memorized the 12 points of the Scout Law, including the 8th point, “A Scout is Obedient.” The explanation of that law says,

“A Scout follows the rules of his family, school, and troop. He obeys the laws of his community and country. If he thinks these rules and laws are unfair, he tries to have them changed in an orderly manner rather than disobeying them.”

Curious about the other side of the gender coin, I looked for obedience in the Girl Scout Law and found that obedience was included in that organization’s values as early as 1914 and again in 1920 saying,

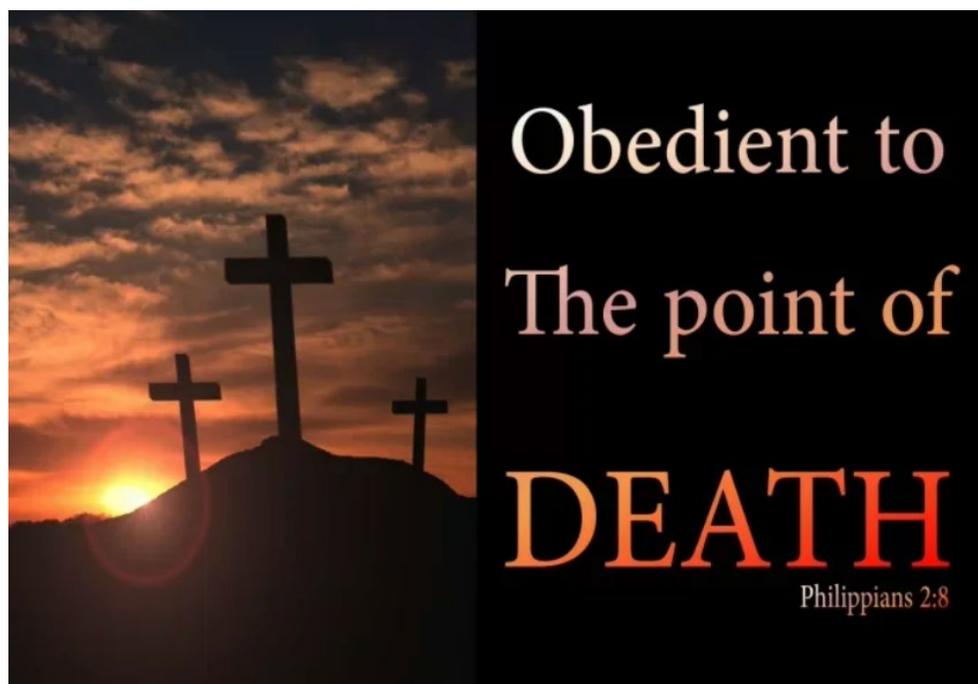
“A Girl Scout obeys orders.”

In the next available posting from GSA in 1972, obedience had disappeared. I am certain that GSA embraces obedience even though it isn’t a part of today’s Girl Scout Laws.

None of the above suggests the level of obedience followed by Jesus: Death. Jesus allowed Himself to be taunted. He allowed Himself to be whipped. He allowed Himself to be nailed to a cross and left until dead.

When I think about obedience I will remember the extent to which my Savior went.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YII4o33rJdA>



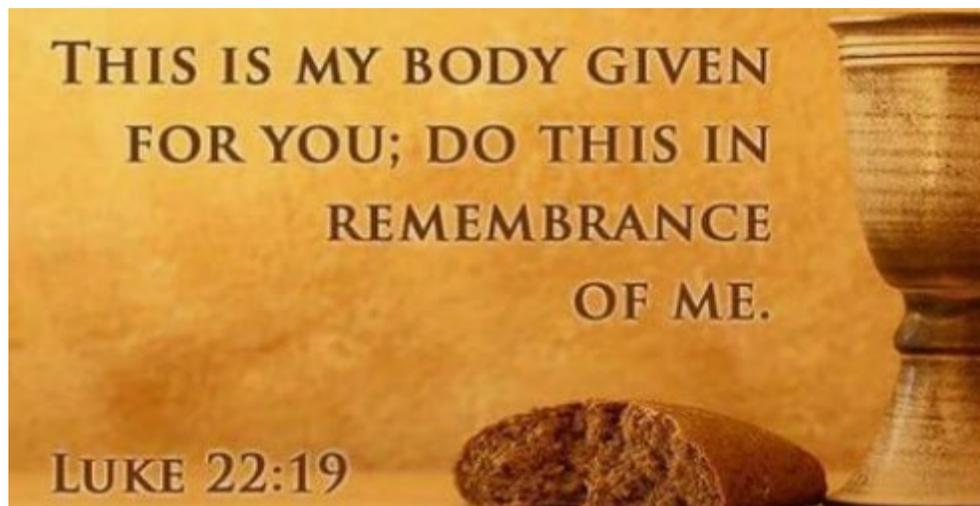
April 16

Luke 22:19 “Do this in remembrance of Me.”

Growing up at 1st Presbyterian Church during the time before the permanent sanctuary was constructed, the communion table on the stage in the fellowship hall was inscribed with these words: “DO THIS IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME.” That time was in the latter half of the ‘50s and I was a pre-teen with little understanding of what those words really meant. I don’t remember taking communion until after completing a confirmation class during junior high. I only knew that the communion elements appeared on the table whenever the congregation celebrated.

Jesus spoke these words to His disciples at the Last Supper a few days before. They, too, didn’t understand the significance of these words as they were about to witness the crucifixion. On this day of observance between Christ’s death and His resurrection, ponder those words and let remembrance of Him increase.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WReXhV7Mpl0>



April 17 – Easter

Luke 24:5 “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He isn’t here, but has been raised.”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITZ1kNfT5SY>

