

Daily Lenten Meditations 2020

A collaboration among the Wesley Foundations of the new conference.

Prayerfully written by college students.

Tennessee-Western Kentucky Conference of the United Methodist Church

The Wesley Foundations within this new conference are excited for this unity and the transformations to come! Praise be to God for his grace, love, and mercy!

Peace be with you!

Wednesday, February 26

“How are you?”

Read Psalm 51:1-17

“Cry aloud; do not hold back; lift up your voice like a trumpet; declare to my people their transgression, to the house of Jacob their sins.

-Isaiah 58:1

I frequently find myself confronted with the question “How are you?”. Although this seems like a simple question, I almost always avoid answering this question with the truth. Typically, I respond “I am good. How are you?” because it’s the easiest answer. I tell myself that I choose the easy answer because I am in a hurry or I don’t know the person who asked the question well, but I make this choice because I am afraid to allow myself to accurately evaluate how I am. Although it is not hard to just tell others how I feel or what is happening in my life, I don’t want to answer the question because it means admitting the truth to myself.

I believe that many people struggle with admitting the truth of what is going on in their lives. After taking part in many sins, David struggles and avoids the feelings that weigh on his heart. In a confrontation by Nathan, David begins to let all of his feelings and struggles pour out, and he asks God to create in him a clean heart. I like to think that Nathan could have asked the simple question of “How are you? No, really, how are you?” to get this response from David. This simple question, when asked by the right person, shows that people care about what is happening in our lives and prompts us to let down any walls we surround ourselves with.

Now is the time to let down your walls. I ask this question to you: *How are you? Really, how are you?* Take some time to think about the events happening in your life and how they make you feel. You may actually be happy and well, but it is also normal to feel sad, lonely, or just like the weight of the world is on your shoulders. Take this time to be honest with yourself because it’s never too late to admit your feelings to yourself, someone else, or to God. Answering this question truthfully brings us closer to God.

Prayer: Dear God, allow me to let down my walls to share and face the truth of my own burdens. Help me give my troubles to you, Lord, so that you can create in me a clean heart. In your name, Amen.

-Ally Webb (Belmont Wesley)

Thursday, February 27

“Up on Your Feet and On Your Way!”

Read: Jonah 3:1-10, Psalm 51

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.

-Psalm 51:10 (NRSV)

In Jonah 3, God calls Jonah to travel across Nineveh, which was a three-day walk, and proclaim God’s message. This is the second time God commands Jonah to go, and after him running from God the first time and ending up in the belly of a whale, he obeys. I really like the Message translation of the first two verses. It says, “Up on your feet and on your way to the big city of Nineveh!” Sometimes I feel like life is kind of like this. I sense God nudging me to do something or use me in a way that feels uncomfortable and I push back on it, not wanting to take the risk and step out of my comfort bubble. Often, this lands me in a figurative whale’s belly, but the cool thing is, God doesn’t just give up on me or leave me in the belly. God challenges me again, tells me to get up on my feet, and leads me where I am called to go.

I also catch myself doubting my ability to successfully follow God. Oftentimes I don’t feel equipped to carry out God’s mission or confident enough in my own faith to make a difference. When I am in these lows, I find comfort in praying Psalm 51, asking God to renew my heart, grant me a willing spirit, and deliver me from sins of the world. It is in these moments of crying out and blindly trusting God that the greatest transformation is experienced in my life. I want to get up and go on my way to sing the praises of the Lord now and forevermore.

Thought for the day: God wants me to run alongside God. Not away, against, or into, but *with*.

Prayer: Lord, open my heart and mind to follow You when I am called. Blanket me in grace so that I may live my life in an abundant way that glorifies You. Call me and I will follow. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

-Macy Hudson (Belmont Wesley)

Friday, February 28

Transgression Met with Compassion

“You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise” Psalm 51:16-17

Read:Jonah 4: 1-11; Psalm 51; Romans 1:8-17

Devotional:

Jonah 4:1-11 Like Jonah, I can let worldly inconveniences cause me to be angry. When God shows his love and compassion I resist and insist on staying in my dark mood. Jonah tells God in verse 3 “please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live” but God doesn’t work by our commands. The Lord doesn’t wish for Jonah to suffer or to die, instead, He shows his kindness and compassion. Whenever faced with opposition or anger, a response in kindness and love prevails. You cannot fight anger with more anger, just like you cannot fight hatred with more hate. God taught Jonah the importance of trusting in His prevailing love.

Romans 1:8-17 Paul reflects on how he’s accepting of all and will not hold back the Gospel from anyone who will listen. He’s unashamed of his faith in Jesus Christ as Lord. In our world of instant messaging and endless exposure to marketing, we as Christians must remember our priorities. Paul’s priority is to live out his passion for spreading the Gospel. He knows that “in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed” therefore he is just the messenger. We often take on the weight of worrying if our words will bring others to Christ, but this is a reminder from Paul that God will prevail.

Thought for the day: Our time on this Earth is finite, spend the precious moments with those you love and show love to strangers even when it seems uncomfortable. The Lord sees all and most importantly, your heart.

Prayer: Lord, let my life be a beacon of Your Goodness and compassion for humanity. I pray that my disposition for kindness and love will resonate with every soul I come across in my daily life and forever. Amen.

Prayer focus: Someone with unresolved anger.

-Candace Collier (Belmont Wesley)

Saturday, February 29

“Moving into Consciousness”

Read Psalm 51

“About that time... “I tell you the truth, unless you turn from your sins and become like little children, you will never get into the Kingdom of Heaven”... What sorrow awaits the world, because it tempts people to sin. Temptations are inevitable, but what sorrow awaits the person who does the tempting.” - Matthew 18: 1-7

Thought of the Day: God wants me to be aware of my actions during the day.

When I was 5, my twin sister and I were in a Chinese restaurant with our family after the Christmas Eve service at church, and they had some of those coin machines that you could get those little floppy sticky hands that you could throw against something and it would stick to it. We didn't have any money, and couldn't convince any family members to give us any, and so we made the decision to take quarters out of a St. Jude's donation display. The reason I tell this story though is not to point out the obvious sin that came in that moment, but to point out the bad decision that led to the sin.

Psalm 51:5 says “For I was born a sinner, yes from the moment my mother conceived me.” I think for a lot of us, the word sin is hard to define. For me, sin comes from the decisions that we make that end up causing harm to others or more importantly ourselves. What Matthew 18 is trying to convey is that unless you become aware of what causes the decisions that lead up to the sin, you can't ever fully move away from the pain it causes. The temptation of sin that the passage talks about is the moments that lead up to the “sin”. To stop the temptations and the loud thoughts that run through our unconscious brain, we have to become aware of ourselves consciously in the moment. To be able to see and understand what is causing those decisions to be made. For my sister and I, those moments leading up to stealing the money weren't full of conscious thoughts of stealing from sick children, but instead of unconscious thoughts of what we wanted in that moment and of reassurance that it was the right thing. We didn't think about the way we were hurting others.

In our daily lives there are things that we do that can hurt others and hurt ourselves, and it comes from the temptations of our own brain. It's the unconscious thoughts that we let run wild in our heads that can tend to override the transition into conscious and purposeful thoughts that drive our actions. To truly move away from the bigger sins that this passage refers to, we have to become aware of ourselves and the way that our actions can cause pain. We have to chose in that moment, to fight the unconscious thoughts to become present in the moment, and to choose to let the conscious and rational thoughts drive the way we come into a better way of living.

Prayer: Dear God, help me to move into my conscious thoughts in moments that are tough, so that I can move away from the temptations of my unconscious self. In your name, Amen.

Abby Mink, TTU Wesley

Sunday, March 1

The Daily Examen

Read Psalm 32

The prayer of Examen is a spiritual practice that trains us to still our hearts and minds, reflect on the day/week/month/season that has just passed, and reset for the time to come. We have sprinkled this practice throughout this devotional guide to assist you in your journey through the season of Lent.

1. Become aware of God's presence: Lookback on the day and note the times you felt God was with you, assisting. Feel God with you now and ask to become more conscious of God's presence. It may be helpful to repeat a phrase like, "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10), or any other prayer that connects you to a Higher Power.
2. Look back with gratitude: Review the past 24 hours and notice what you're thankful for. What happened to make you feel blessed? Take a moment to give thanks to God for providing you with these blessings.
3. Take an honest look at your day: Note everything that happened over the course of the past 24 hours, your interactions with others, and your emotions. We often rush through each day, not pausing to reflect. Doing a deep, honest reflection of the past day causes us to learn more about ourselves and improve our future actions.
4. Choose one part of the day, and pray about it: From doing your review, you might find something God is directing you to work on - an emotion, a relationship that needs mending, an unpleasant situation. Pray for it, ask God's guidance to resolve it.
5. Pray for tomorrow: Ask God to guide you tomorrow leading you to your highest purpose. Send love and light to tomorrow, praying for wisdom and strength. Feel deep gratitude, knowing God has already answered your prayer and tomorrow is already blessed. Take some deep breaths, and know that all is well.

Monday, March 2

Fear Meets its Maker

Read 1 Kings 19:1-8

Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. 2So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, "May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them." 3Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, 4while he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness. He came to a broom bush, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." 5Then he lay down under the bush and fell asleep. All at once an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat." 6He looked around, and there by his head was some bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again. 7The angel of the LORD came back a second time and touched him and said, "Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you." 8So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God.

Read Psalm 32

Ever since I was a small child I was scared. I was scared of talking to new people, trying new things, speaking up for myself, taking risks, and even cutting my own food. I was and still am constantly afraid and nervous, just as Elijah was so scared for his life that he asked God for him to die. Yet God told the man to get up off his but and eat, just as he tells me everyday to get up and to speak for myself and others. Just as God tells all of us to go out and show those who despise us love, courtesy, and respect. Just as God tells us to go and serve those who are lacking, whether it is with money, housing, food, or love. No matter how scared we are at taking those risks, God tells us to go on out and go on our journey, just as Elijah did.

As said in Psalm 32, the Lord will protect and defend us as long as we admit and acknowledge our sins and mistakes. This applies to us falling short of delivering peace, love, and service to those that we think to have wronged us. We need to acknowledge that we fell short and admit that we failed due to our fears and anxieties in order for us to grow past them and for us to properly serve our communities. Once we are able to come to terms with our own shortcomings and misfortunes we will finally be able to properly use the strength God has always provided us. It is only when we keep silent and fail to speak up that we fail ourselves and our community, but we can always come back from it due to god's love and patience.

Prayer: Dear Father, thank you for your everlasting patience for when we feel scared and lost. Through you and our own acceptance, we can find the strength and courage that we need to get through the day, as well as helping others through their own days.

Laurel White (Austin Peay Wesley)

Tuesday, March 3

The Daily Examen

Read Hebrews 4:14-5:10

The prayer of Examen is a spiritual practice that trains us to still our hearts and minds, reflect on the day/week/month/season that has just passed, and reset for the time to come. We have sprinkled this practice throughout this devotional guide to assist you in your journey through the season of Lent.

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4. Choose one part of the day, and pray about it: From doing your review, you might find something God is directing you to work on - an emotion, a relationship that needs mending, an unpleasant situation. Pray for it, ask God's guidance to resolve it.
5. Pray for tomorrow: Ask God to guide you tomorrow leading you to your highest purpose. Send love and light to tomorrow, praying for wisdom and strength. Feel deep gratitude, knowing God has already answered your prayer and tomorrow is already blessed. Take some deep breaths, and know that all is well.

Wednesday, March 4

GOD the Father

Read Exodus 34:1-9, 27-28; Matthew 18:10-14

“Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sin is covered.... Therefore, let all the faithful pray to you while you may be found... You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance.... Rejoice in the LORD and be glad, you righteous; sing, all you who are upright in heart!”

~Psalm 32

Thought for the Day

God protects us with

His grace and mercy.

Just come and receive.

Be fed.

At the beginning of the spring semester, I received a word written on a paper star at the first UT Martin Wesley Foundation worship service. We talked about epiphany and the magi who were enlightened and came with frankincense, gold, and myrrh. At the end of the service, I received the word *comfort*. This word brings back memories of home, snuggling up to my mom and dad with baby sister in tow to listen to them read bible stories when we were little. It's nostalgic, homey, and comforting. I'm reminded of my parents' rules as I grew up and how I often found them unfair and compared my friends' house rules to mine. Now that I'm older, I know that was a way to show me their love. They wanted me home safe every night and out of trouble. For that, I am immensely grateful.

Still today, I'm learning repeatedly of God's love, protection, and comfort he provides for us as a Father would. I'm reminded of the Ten Commandments, which He gave to the Israelites and what we still follow today. And even as I, or we, may wander and compare God's inbreaking Kingdom versus the consumerism of our world today, God is looking—*calling*—for us like in the parable of the lost sheep. He constantly leaves the ninety-nine in search of the one and rejoices when he finds him/her and brings His sheep *home*.

In this season, I remember how Jesus Christ taught and disciplined faithfully for three years, walking his way to the cross to make way for His sheep to come home and receive grace and mercy. When trials and failures come, remain strong in his grace and mercy, the path is not meant to be easy. Come home and be comforted, share God's love, protection, and comfort with others. Exercise his grace and mercy by opening your fists, receive and be fed. Then, when the time comes, go and feed others and rejoice.

Prayer: Dear God, our Father who protects, loves, and comforts us, we pray that You may open our fists and we may come home. May we remember the grace and mercy You offer us now and forever, and may You guide us as we feed Your sheep, and remember Your sacrifice as we walk our way in this season to the cross. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Prayer focus: Comfort, feed and be fed.

Lexi McGranahan(UT Martin Wesley)

Thursday, March 5

Have Faith and Give Thanks Even in Hard Times

Read Psalm 121; 2 Timothy 1: 3-7

We have all had rough patches in our lives, and sometimes it is rather hard to stick with God through it all, but I would like to share a story from my life that might help you understand why it's important to keep faith in God. About 10 years ago, my grandma was diagnosed with breast cancer. It was kind of advanced when the doctors found it and, if I remember correctly, they wanted to operate right away so that it did not spread to the rest of her body. My family and I did not know how to handle the situation right away and it was hard to grasp the enormity of it. But my grandma told us that she was determined to get through it and survive, and she was NOT gonna let the cancer break her down. Even though things weren't exactly going the way she wanted, she kept her strong faith in God. Her faith, support from her family and friends, and a lot of chemotherapy treatments made her, after 8 long, hard years, cancer free. And for that everyone was so thankful. Two years later, however, the cancer was back. But this time it was in her liver(?). This was not what we were expecting at all. My grandma went through more treatments, except it was with radioactive beads. The doctors decided to try this and see how it worked so it was kind of like a test run. We were not very sure about this, but my grandma decided to try it if it would possibly help with the cancer. Now my grandma is doing pretty well most days even though it is sometimes tough, but she has been a fighter and a survivor throughout this whole cancer ordeal. Her faith in God has never wavered through all of it, and it has inspired our family to keep going and keep our faith in God strong also.

I'm telling you this story to show how important it is to keep believing in God even when everything seems to be going completely and totally wrong. We should stick with God in the good and the bad because He is who will help get us through it all. God should also be thanked both in the good times and the bad. It makes God happy when we thank him even when things are not going our way. That tells him that we trust that he will make all things work out for the best. Far too often I think we forget that God likes to hear our prayers in addition to giving thanks to him. The combination of the two delights God and says that we have faith that he will make things better in the future.

Thought for the Day: Remember no matter how hard things in life may seem, keep your faith in God. He will NEVER leave you.

Prayer: Hey God, thank you for always watching over us. Help us to always remember to pray to you and to thank you both in the good times and bad. We love you so much. Amen.

Madeline Einerson (UTM Wesley)

Friday, March 6

“The Greatest Participation Award”

Read Psalm 121, Micah 7:18-20, and Romans 3:21-31

What is the one thing that everyone has done at some point in his/her life? Youth Sports. If you remember your recreational sport days, you'll remember the best part of it all: the postgame juice boxes and oatmeal cream pies and the participation awards. Everyone was a winner. You didn't receive an award for playing well, it was for your ability to get a ride, show up with a jersey of some kind, and occasionally try to make a basket, shoot a shot, or catch a pass while your teammate picked flowers or sometimes their nose.

When we embark on our walk with God, we come to realize the difference between a participation award and a reward. For clarification, a reward is something that is given to you because you have earned it through hard work, while a participation award is given to anyone who shows up to an event. Verse 23 of Romans 3 says, "ALL have sinned and fallen short of God's glory, but ALL are treated as righteous freely by his grace because of a ransom that was paid by Christ Jesus." Paul goes on to use phrases like "Through HIS faithfulness" and "GOD's patient tolerance", but what does this tell us? We have received, not achieved, the most important participation award possible. We play a game called life on Earth, and we can miss the target, fall short of success, and sometimes struggle, but God continues to award us with forgiveness, unwavering love, and compassion.

As I read through Micah 7:18-20 and Psalm 121, I also recognized a common theme of God's protection and compassion. Micah 7:18 finishes with "He doesn't hold on to his anger forever; He delights in faithful love." How amazing is it to know that someone DELIGHTS in faithful love, DELIGHTS in forgiving us for our sins, and DELIGHTS in continually having to overlook our sins? Again, God is awarding, not rewarding, us with His compassion and love. Despite our defiance and failure to uphold our end of the deal, God is joyous in the process of forgiving us. Not only does He continue to wash us clean of our sin, but He also protects us in every way possible. From Psalm 121:6-8, you can see that in all circumstances, conditions, and directions, God offers his protection; He'll protect you in the "night" or "day", when you are "going" or "coming", from "now until forever from now." In all parts of life, if we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, or if we show up with a jersey ready to play, God will reward you with protection, compassion, and unwavering love- the most important participation award possible.

With all of this said, these passages serve as a proclamation of God's power, His absolute permanence in our chaotic life, and His amazing grace. I hope as you read through them, you didn't focus on our imperfections, but His ultimate strength and sacrifice. He loves you! He loves to watch you grow, and He will ALWAYS love, protect, and forgive you... "from now until forever from now."

Prayer: *Heavenly Father, allow us to recognize your strength and compassion and to glorify your amazing grace, because it is you who has given us this life and the opportunity to praise your name. We thank you Lord for all you have done. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

Catey Hunt (UT Martin Wesley)

Saturday, March 7

“The Mountains”

Read Psalm 121

*“I lift up my eyes to the hills-- where does my help come from?
My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.”*

Ever since I was a child my parents have taken me to the mountains in East Tennessee. It was always a great experience, but the trek up the mountain was always an arduous task. We would go hiking around the cabin and after a while our legs would get tired and sweaty.

Though these times in life were hard there would always be a time that my parents would take out of our walk to pray. This gave us time to rest, relax, and take in the beauty of God’s creation. This moment of prayer taught me that in life when times get hard, it’s okay to take a moment and breathe.

When we take time out of our day to pray to God and realize that he is where strength comes from, we can breathe and get a second breath that God gives us.

Prayer of the day: God please be with us as we go through our busy lives. Give us the strength to walk up our own mountains and keep our eyes on you. Amen.

Gracie Haynes (Austin Peay Wesley)

Sunday, March 8

Transformation

Read Matthew 17, 1-9 and John 3, 1-17

Throughout the Bible, many people are transformed through God. Jacob is “transformed” into Israel. Saul is “transformed” into Paul. In both cases, God takes someone and helps them become the person He has planned them to be. But for many people, we aren’t called to service by wrestling with God, nor in a flash of light. Many of us, like Nicodemus in the Gospel of Luke, have questions, and that’s ok.

In today’s society, we as Christians feel that we need to know the answer to every question anyone will ask us about our faith. And, even worse, if we can’t make a strong argument for Christ in any given situation, we sometimes But, as we see in Luke, even those who lead us have to ask questions. And, most importantly in Luke, we see, despite the fact we don’t know everything there is to know, that God is there to help us when we stumble.

PRAYER- Lord, help us to not be ashamed of our questions, but rather use the questions we have so we may grow closer to you. Amen

THOUGHT OF THE DAY- Don’t dwell on the past. Rather, use it as a guide so that you can be transformed through Christ in your future.

Travis Lawson (MTSU Wesley)

Monday, March 9

“But God... Why?”

Read Psalms 128:1-6 and Hebrews 3:1-6

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding” Proverbs 3:5

God has placed many roadblocks in my way throughout my life. Each time I was faced with one of those challenges my response was, “But God... why?”. Why, God, can my life not happen according to my plan? Why not this way? I was upset and confused by the times God told me no.

Thought of the Day: God wants me to trust him and respond with obedience to his calling.

They say hindsight is 20/20. After some time, I began to see how God was working through those hardships. In Psalms 128, it speaks of the blessings God gives His people when they are obedient. Obedience is not an easy concept for me, especially when the task is something that I struggle with. My heavenly calling is the first thing that comes to my mind. The call to love others no matter how they are different than me. The call to lay my pride aside and to be a servant to all. The call to see everyone as a precious child of God. Our callings are not easy tasks and can take years of practice, but they are not impossible with God’s help. Hebrews 3:1-6 encourages us to keep our thoughts fixed on Jesus. We must hold firmly to the hope that He gives us and be obedient to God’s individual calling that he has for each of us. Let us not respond with, “But God... why?”, but instead let us answer with, “Here I am, Lord”.

Prayer: Gracious and Loving God, we confess that we have heard your calling but find it difficult to obey. Help us to respond with joyful obedience. You are a good good father, and we choose to put our trust in you alone. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

PRAYER FOCUS: Those who are discerning God’s call for their life

Hannah Underwood (MTSU Wesley)

Tuesday, March 10

“God’s Blessings for Us”

Read Romans 4: 1-13

The LORD bless you from Zion. May you see

the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of

your life. ~ Psalm 128: 5

Often, we hear in our society and culture today the phrase #BLESSED. It is often accompanied by pictures on social media of dream vacations, expensive electronics or jewelry, or new cars or houses. Yet in all of us that use that phrase, how often are we thanking God rather than showing up our peers? Do we remember what it means to be truly blessed?

The blessings that God gives us are perhaps a little different from the #BLESSED blessings that are so often shared. We see in Paul’s letter to Rome how God has blessed Abraham, and how God chooses to bless us. Paul reminds us that it isn’t through any works of our own that we earn a blessing. If we seek to earn such a gift, we see it as wages, or a payment that is owed to us. In versus 6-13 Paul shows us that it is through faith in God that we receive God’s blessings. It doesn’t matter the “stage” of faith you have, or how far in your journey in Christ that you are. God loves you and blesses you because of who God is and not how much we do.

Remember to take a break. God rested on the seventh day and so should we. “Remember the Sabbath and keep it Holy.” As you slow down from the grind we have of life, look around you. How has God blessed you in life? Despite all the twists and turns in life I’ve been through, when I remember to pause, look around, and really SEE the people and community around me, I can’t help but see how God has #BLESSED me. It really is through nothing that I am, but everything that God is that I have a network of people that love and care about me. Reach out and talk to someone. More people love you than you know. As a challenge for the rest of this season of Lent, share the people that love and care about you with #BLESSED and why they are a blessing in your life. You’ll be reminded just how much love is out there, and maybe, if we all do it, we may remember the true meaning of blessed.

Andi Barker (MTSU Wesley)

Wednesday, March 11

Freedom Through Christ

Read John 7:53-8:11 & Psalms 128

“²¹ whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.”

- John 3:21

All of us, like this woman, has been caught in the act of sin and stand condemned by God; but God offers grace to those who repent. This passage shows God himself changing the appointed punishment and he reestablishes the foundations of righteousness. In [John 7:53-8:11](#) God shows us his mercy towards all people. God said “neither do I condemn you, Go now and leave your life of sin” he said this after he told the Pharisees “if anyone of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her”. He was saying that no one is without sin, but through the glory of God and his mercy we are covered by grace. Colossians 2:13-16 tells us that “¹³when you were dead in your sins... God made you alive with Christ. ¹⁴ having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross”

In [John 3:18-21](#) it tells us that the Light (Jesus) has come into the world to show us mercy and not punish us but deliver us from darkness. Life is not fair; our lives are messy and hard, and most of the time we think that nothing is going our way. Forgiveness is God’s recipe for a fresh start. Not only will God free you from your sins but, he will bless you beyond compare. In Psalm 128 it says that God blesses all who walk in his ways. Blessing and prosperity will be yours, who walk in the footsteps of God. Follow God down his path and not your own. Seek him first and may his will be done.

Thought for the Day: God wants us to repent for he has shown us mercy

Prayer: Lord, in our repentance show us your glory and lead us down the path of righteousness. Help us to follow your will and show mercy to others. In Jesus name, Amen

Deborah Stott (MTSU Wesley)

Thursday, March 12

“Where’s the Exit?”

Read Exodus 16:1-8

“He is before all things, and by him all things hold together. He is also the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the first born from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything.

For God was pleased to have his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile everything to himself, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood shed on the cross.” Colossians 1:17-20

Do you ever feel like your burning the candle at both ends? Like you’re running around with no direction? Wherever you turn things fall apart? So much so that you want to give up or even shut down? I have.

I am the kind of person that likes to be in the know. I like to know everything that is going on and be involved in it all. I like to be in control. I like to know what is going to happen when and why and have a back up plan in case the first falls through. I do this with everything: school, work, home, etc. I give my all to everything. But sometimes I think, “What’s the point? Why am I giving everything but getting nothing? When is someone going to help me?” But the irony is... I am often so busy, that I ignore the people that are trying to help me, check in on me, tell me to slow down and rest.

I am so busy running around, that instead of taking note of the ways and people God has provided for me, I keep complaining about how exhausted I am. But if I just took a moment to stop and look around, I would see that I am not alone. Even if there aren’t people around me helping, when I take a step back and look, I see all that God has done for me. God has and is always providing exactly what I need in each exact moment. No more. No less. I try to rush Him. I try to ignore Him. I complain to (and sometimes about) Him wondering when He is gonna show up and do something. But most of the time, He has already done it, and I missed it because I wasn’t focusing on Him. How often do you find yourself in this situation? I know I find myself here more often than I would like to admit.

How have you been missing God’s provisions in your life? Have you been running so far, so fast, so long that you missed your exit? Maybe even your exit to the cross? Have you been living your life in fast-forward wondering when the happy ending will come? Let’s pause, rewind, and see that it already has come. God has already written and executed His plan. He has already provided. Jesus died on the cross so we don’t have to live each day wondering where our strength will come from, wondering what will happen next. Just like God provided the exact amount of quail and manna the Israelites needed for each day (no more, no less), He is providing for you. He is right next to you running this race. Sure, we have all screwed up along the way, taken wrong turns, ignored the road signs, and run out of gas, but God has the Map and is guiding you through each turn.

Thought for the Day: Where has/is God providing for you?

Prayer Focus: Ask God to show you ways that He can provide for someone else through you.

- Camryn Shepard (MTSU Wesley)

Friday, March 13

“The Walls that Build Temples”

Read: Ephesians 2:11-22

For the Lord is the great God, the great King above all gods. In his hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to him. The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land.

--Psalms 95:3-5 (NIV)

Every day, in every moment, we are surrounded by walls. Not literal walls, necessarily, though that may be true for some of us--but figurative walls. Ones that separate us from each other. Personally, I feel these walls in every aspect of my life; they dictate my actions, my thoughts, and my words. There are so many walls that I can name--walls between me and people of different races, genders, beliefs, ages, and lifestyles. These could be walls that have been “constructed,” so to speak, by society and culture, established long before I physically existed; these could also be walls that I have built to protect myself at the expense of relationships with my brothers and sisters in Christ. I have learned to walk through life with fear, sticking to the path that I can easily see, avoiding touching these walls for fear of disrupting the “peace.”

But what peace could there possibly be if I live in fear? God does not call us to live in fear. Because of Jesus and his sacrifice and because of God’s mercy and grace, we are told not to live our lives in fear--that we have nothing to fear, because we have an all-loving and amazing God on our side. The earth molds to the will of His hands and the seas part with the whisper on His breath, so why do we let these walls control our lives? In Ephesians 2:11-22, it speaks on how God breaks down the walls of hostility between us and creates a unified body—one of peace and love. The most amazing part of this is that not only does God break down the walls of hostility that we have built between us, but that He has constructed a new set of walls—ones that guide us and unify us. These walls—the ones built from God’s love—form buildings and these buildings become a holy temple, built in peace; it says, “In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.” It is described as a household and a dwelling where we find reconciliation through God, with Jesus Christ as its cornerstone.

Therefore, we must ask ourselves: what are the walls of hostility and isolation that exist in our lives? What are the ones that exist due to society, culture, or history, and what are the ones that we have created? How can we, as individuals and as a community allow God to break down these walls to build ones that will rise to create a guiding, unifying, loving holy temple, not with our worldly lust for control as the cornerstone but with Jesus Christ as the cornerstone? How can I/we recognize the holy walls that have already been built and that are being built now?

Thought of the Day: God calls us to recognize the holy walls in our lives and to let them guide us.

Prayer: Dear Lord, help us let go of this want for control over these walls in our lives. We need Your holy temple, a set of walls that does not separate us, but unifies us; with Jesus Christ as the cornerstone, this holy temple can exist on Earth as it does in Heaven. Amen.

Prayer Focus: Those struggling to feel unity and peace.

Beatrice Barnett (MTSU Wesley)

Saturday, March 14

Trust When Things are Tough

Exodus 16:27-35 and John 4:1-6

One day, discussion at my Sunday school came around to the idea of finding a reason for why certain events happen in your life and whether we should accept that everything that happens in our lives is a part of some master plan. And on hand I can be a very independent person. I like to think of myself as self-sufficient and capable of taking care of myself. And yet on the other hand, what this passage in Exodus shows has its own draw. The idea of being able to depend on God to provide your food every single day for forty years is something that can be hard to fathom in our fast-paced modern world. As dangerous as the Israelites' situation was, I can't imagine a more physical example of God's love then to have him literally rain food from the sky every day, just for you.

More times in my life though, I feel closer to Jesus in our passage in John. Here Jesus is said to leave Judea not because of any higher plan he hears from God, but because the Pharisees have caught wind of all the people the disciples and he are baptizing. When I face situations like this, where I feel pushed around by circumstance and not in control of my own life, it can be frustrating. More than anything I would prefer if God just swooped in and dropped just what I need from the heavens.

Yet there's something comforting in how Jesus travels from baptizing people and ends up arriving at a well. No matter the chaos and pressures surrounding his circumstances for coming to Samaria, he still ends up connecting to water. I feel like we get asked to trust in God, we aren't expected to sit around and wait for our solutions to just pop out of nowhere. I believe sometimes what we need to do is keep our eyes open and see how even when change comes around, we can continue to do what we were called to do in different ways.

Thought for the Day

God's unfailing love is with us in the best moments in life as well as the challenges.

Prayer

Dear Father, keep our eyes and hearts open to you so that even in times of tribulation, we don't lose sight of your unfailing love. Amen.

Prayer Focus: Noticing God providing in big and small ways.

Mandy Schremmer (Vanderbilt Wesley)

Sunday, March 15

Faith Brings Joy

Read Psalm 95

We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.

Romans 5:3-5 (NIV)

What has caused you to thank God recently? What brings you joy or makes you thankful?

When I think about what brings me joy, I remember my favorite morning runs. To me, there is no better way to start the day than a nice run in the early morning, when the sun is just starting to rise, and before it gets too hot (especially in the summer). Each run I have reminds me that every day is a new day, and that only I have the ability to decide how I am going to make the most of my day, including my mood, my actions and behaviors, and my thoughts. Not only does my morning run clear my mind and make me optimistic about the coming day, but being in nature exposes me to the beauty of God's creation that I often take for granted. Sometimes we can get so caught up in our busy lives that we overlook all that God has blessed us with, and what he continues to do each day.

It is important to remember that no matter what we go through, God is with us. Romans 5:1-11 teaches us that though we face struggles and difficulties in our lives, we can overcome them with God's help. Each hard thing we face is another opportunity to grow in our faith, and as we grow closer to God, we can start to see how He brings joy to our lives, even in the midst of challenges.

Thought for the Day

God wants me to know that whatever I may face, He is with me and will allow joy to come out of even the hardest trials.

Prayer

Dear Lord, please help me to see that though I may be facing a problem, you are with me and you will get me through it. Help my faith to stand strong and let me to see the joy and beauty you surround me with each and every day, so that I may praise you with thanksgiving in return. Amen.

Prayer Focus: Someone Overcoming a Challenge.

(Vanderbilt Wesley Fellowship)

Monday, March 16

“Giving Up”

Read Psalm 81

*“I removed the burden from their shoulders;
their hands were set free from the basket.”*

As a senior in college there are many times whenever I have wanted to give up. It happens all the time with my fellow students and many of them do give up. During the Lenten season however to give up means something different. As a child I either gave up snacks or soda for the forty day time period.

Now I struggle giving up the control. I feel the need to control the things over my life that I simply do not have control over. In the Psalm David calls to God a prayer to take the burden of the shoulders of the many from their work, their stress, and helplessness that people feel from their burdens.

Whenever I read this Psalm it reminds me that I do not have to do everything alone. God took the burden off our shoulders when Jesus died on the cross. He bears our cross. Whenever I feel like I’m the one in control and no one is there to help, the weight of the world can crush me. This Lent Season I am giving up control. Once you let go of all your burdens and let God do the carrying, you don’t want to give up.

Prayer: God please help us have the courage to trust you. Let us confide in you and know you hold our future.

Grant Burlingame (Austin Peay Wesley)

Tuesday, March 17

The Daily Examen

Read Psalm 81

The prayer of Examen is a spiritual practice that trains us to still our hearts and minds, reflect on the day/week/month/season that has just passed, and reset for the time to come. We have sprinkled this practice throughout this devotional guide to assist you in your journey through the season of Lent.

1. Become aware of God's presence: Lookback on the day and note the times you felt God was with you, assisting. Feel God with you now and ask to become more conscious of God's presence. It may be helpful to repeat a phrase like, "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10), or any other prayer that connects you to a Higher Power.
2. Look back with gratitude: Review the past 24 hours and notice what you're thankful for. What happened to make you feel blessed? Take a moment to give thanks to God for providing you with these blessings.
3. Take an honest look at your day: Note everything that happened over the course of the past 24 hours, your interactions with others, and your emotions. We often rush through each day, not pausing to reflect. Doing a deep, honest reflection of the past day causes us to learn more about ourselves and improve our future actions.
4. Choose one part of the day, and pray about it: From doing your review, you might find something God is directing you to work on - an emotion, a relationship that needs mending, an unpleasant situation. Pray for it, ask God's guidance to resolve it.
5. Pray for tomorrow: Ask God to guide you tomorrow leading you to your highest purpose. Send love and light to tomorrow, praying for wisdom and strength. Feel deep gratitude, knowing God has already answered your prayer and tomorrow is already blessed. Take some deep breaths, and know that all is well.

Wednesday, March 18

“You are Divine, and Divinely PROTECTED!”

Read John 7: 14-17 & Jeremiah 2: 6-7

*“I removed the burden from their shoulders;
their hands were set free from the basket.
In your distress you called and I rescued you,
I answered you out of a thundercloud;
I tested you at the waters of Meribah.
--Psalm 81: 6-7*

Thought for the Day: I am abundant in all things through Christ. His love and light pours into me effortlessly like blessings directly out of God’s hands. Life is a journey where you purely seek out your purpose. That may be easier said than done, but that is why you have a whole lifetime to do it! Throughout this journey you witness trials and tribulations, all of which was put in your way just to teach you and guide you steps closer to your manifest destiny. God has selected a route for us all, and it is up to you to follow the course through grace and gratitude. He has blessed us with so much and has continued to do such, so why not be grateful for all that you have. Regardless of your situation, there is a way out of the storm and sunshine is at the end of it. Find your way to it, God is on your side. This journey is what you make of it. God gave us the tool of thought, and that power is mighty as he. Positivity can be an amazing driving force! When your thoughts are happy, you attract all things like it. Love and light will pour into you until your cup runneth over, if you open yourself up to it. Once you do why not spread it, shed that light just like our savior has done for us. His presence reflects in us. In this time, there is more darkness shading over the light. God calls upon us to be the change we would like to see in the world. It may take one person to change a light bulb, but just like that light bulb... you can be the one to flip the switch in the world. And I promise you, people will follow in sit!

Prayer: Dear Father, help us realize the bountiful fruit you have bare us with. Continue to pour into us lovingly, as we continue to walk this Earth with everlasting gratitude.

Lyric Carter (TSU Wesley)

Thursday, March 19

***“You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies.
You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
6 Surely your goodness and love will follow me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord
Forever.” - Psalm 23***

Read Ephesians 4:27-32

In life, sometimes people can really push you to your limits. Whether it's your mom, dad, siblings, best friend, or even someone you don't even know. It can be from you having a bad day, someone cutting you in line, or even someone bullying you. As you get older, you learn what ways in which society recommends dealing with your emotions versus how you would like to respond instead.

However, both of these options can lead to earthly or unearthly repercussions, which is why it is important for Christians of all ages to think, instead, about what God teaches us to do and how to respond, within the Bible. Within Ephesians 4:27-32, the Word encourages us to rid ourselves of all bitterness and cast our cares on to him. God lets us know that there is no need to worry and we should let him fight all of our battles, great and small. In turn, as stated in Psalm 23, he will bless us, greatly, and God's "goodness and love [mercy]" will follow us forever.

There will always be people who wish for you to fail, but it is up to you to always live within your truth and stand by your Christian values. When reading these scriptures, you will be reminded just how much God loves you and how even he forgives, so you can too.

Prayer: Lord, please be a constant reminder in our lives, especially when things get tough and others test us, that the battle is not ours, but it is yours. Give us peace of mind that you will handle it all and we will be blessed by you in the end. Amen.

Senia Hernandez (TSU Wesley)

Friday, March 20

The Daily Examen

Read Psalm 23

The prayer of Examen is a spiritual practice that trains us to still our hearts and minds, reflect on the day/week/month/season that has just passed, and reset for the time to come. We have sprinkled this practice throughout this devotional guide to assist you in your journey through the season of Lent.

1. Become aware of God's presence: Lookback on the day and note the times you felt God was with you, assisting. Feel God with you now and ask to become more conscious of God's presence. It may be helpful to repeat a phrase like, "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10), or any other prayer that connects you to a Higher Power.
2. Look back with gratitude: Review the past 24 hours and notice what you're thankful for. What happened to make you feel blessed? Take a moment to give thanks to God for providing you with these blessings.
3. Take an honest look at your day: Note everything that happened over the course of the past 24 hours, your interactions with others, and your emotions. We often rush through each day, not pausing to reflect. Doing a deep, honest reflection of the past day causes us to learn more about ourselves and improve our future actions.
4. Choose one part of the day, and pray about it: From doing your review, you might find something God is directing you to work on - an emotion, a relationship that needs mending, an unpleasant situation. Pray for it, ask God's guidance to resolve it.
5. Pray for tomorrow: Ask God to guide you tomorrow leading you to your highest purpose. Send love and light to tomorrow, praying for wisdom and strength. Feel deep gratitude, knowing God has already answered your prayer and tomorrow is already blessed. Take some deep breaths, and know that all is well.

Saturday, March 21

“God is Always There”

Read Psalm 23

In 2018, my grandmother passed away. The next year, my other grandmother passed away. During those times, I felt lost, and sometimes I still do. I didn't know what to do without these two influential people. I went throughout the next couple of weeks longing for both of them to come back into my life, but I knew that couldn't happen. But I did know who was and still is in my life, God. Through the good and bad, I know God will always be with me, just like he is with you.

Thought of the Day: God is and will always be with you, no matter the situation.

“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want” Psalms 23:1. God will take you places that you need to go, maybe not where you want to go. “Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff – they comfort me,” Psalms 23:4. We go through many troubling times. We feel lost, forgotten, unworthy of God's grace and love. During the good and bad times, God never leaves us. He is right there with us during the midst of the storm. We may not see or hear him, but we will know in our hearts.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, help us with the battles we face. Protect, guide, and comfort us. Help us to know that you are always with us. You never leave us when life gets too hard. Thank you for always being there through the highs and lows. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Leah Underwood (MTSU Wesley)

Sunday, March 22

When I first began to attend MTSU, I started out as a Music Composition major. Being a full-time music major, it was required that I had to be a part of the studio that reflected which instrument I played. For me this was the percussion studio. This was a large group of percussionists who lived and breathed percussive endeavors. I, however, was not so into it as most of these people were, meaning I was an outsider.

Despite the fact that I spent so much time with this group (due mostly to the fact that we had attendance requirements roughly 3 to 5 times a week), I still did not feel as if I was in the group. People wouldn't make eye contact, talk to me, or stop to get to know me, simply because I just didn't value percussion as much as they did. I would be constantly stressing out, realizing that I was not living up to the community expectations. People were betting on when I would leave, or when asked by the instructor after one of my studio performances, "Who really knows this guy?" only four out of about 52 raised their hands.

At this point in my life, I felt as if no one was on my side.

This is where I bring in the scripture; Psalm 23

It reads, "(1) The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. (2) He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, (3) He refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for His name's sake. (4) Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. (5) You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. (6) Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

When you feel as if the weight of the world is too much to handle and you feel like no one is on your side, remember that the Lord is your shepherd, and that even though you may walk through the darkest valley, fear no evil for God is with you.

Here is my prayer going forward:

Lord, help me to recognize that when I am in the darkest valley, you are with me always. Amen.

Jonathan Stalling (MTSU Wesley)

Monday, March 23

“Questioning Faith”

Read Acts 9:1-20

He is the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them-

Psalm 146:6 (NIV)

As a college student facing “Early-life crisis” everyday I am constantly finding myself questioning not only faith but life as a whole in general. For example, “What do I want to be? Who do I want to be? Why is it so hard to get up for class? Does this class hold purpose and if so what’s its use?” Just a few run of the mill thoughts and questions I think every college student deals with.

Faith however, is probably the one that I challenge the most. I as an individual, am not one to sit by and blindly follow someone or something, and I am no different with faith. Reading Acts chapter 9 verses 1-20 really brought this to my heart yet again. Saul, a man who is in the presence of God, who is literally seeing a miracle happen in front of him still asks questions. God shows up in a physical manifestation and Saul still wants to ask questions and have a better understanding with what he is dealing with. Not only Saul in this story is one to question God. Ananias who goes and with the Lords help restores Saul’s loss of sight. Even he! A devoted follower of Christ questioned God’s motives for wanting to help Saul! Now some will say, Saul should not have questioned God nor should have Ananias.

Thought of the Day: God, if anything, understands our emotions.

Now if there is one thing that I have learned from Wesley, its that our God is one of relationship. If anything I think he is one who understands the bizarreness and supernatural way he works. He understands that it does not make sense. God if anything understands emotions. Yet through all the questions, simply asks us to love one another in our search for redemption and answers. So that one day we can help him in the redemption of the Cosmos.

Prayer: Hey God, in our confusion, frustration, and shortcomings. Remind us that we are human, we are imperfect but not alone in our imperfections. For we have all made mistakes, and you will be there to hold our hand even when it feels like you are everywhere but. Amen.

Brent Bachman (MTSU Wesley)

Monday, March 24

Praise the Lord!

Read Psalm 146

Walk with my train of thought for a moment: There are times we have so much going on in our lives that we get in the mode of “I can do this. I can do *all* of this. In *my* power, in *my* strength.” Sounds great... until it fails. I don't know about yall, but that mindset is often when I find myself overwhelmed and crashing. It's in those crashing moments that I finally figure out that my dependence/trust was on myself... Oof, how often do I do that?... Sometimes, I even find other objects to place my dependence on when I am metaphorically falling. Sometimes I even go down a path where every false pillar of support needs to be removed before I finally realize the one true stable pillar that will never fail.

This psalmist proposes we praise the Lord. But why? Notice the last set of verses in this psalm. Notice what the psalmist mentions of God's character. He is the creator. He is faithful. He is just, gracious, loving, and merciful. He watches over us. He hears us and knows us, and wants you to know Him. The greater your knowledge and awareness of Him grows, the greater your ability to praise Him. Praise Him for who God is and what He's done for you! *Recall*. Recall His promises to you, times God has seen you through troubles, times you have depended on Him, recall the gospel to mind. Recall God's great love for you and ultimate redeeming sacrifice for you. Praise the Lord in every way you deem suitable. Praise can vary in different ways. Praise Him, actively depend on Him, and *REST* in Him. We have an active relationship with an everlasting God who does not change, His promises and character is everlasting too.

Thought for the day: Realizing who God is and what He's done, helps us trust and rest in Him. May we be found always praising, always trusting, and remembering you are always blessed.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank you and praise you for who you are and that you've chosen to reveal yourself to us. We thank you for the privileges of prayer and the ability to bring praise, thanksgiving, petitions, and requests before you. We pray for understanding and comprehension of who you are, and the ability to rest in who you are. Caring for ourselves so we can also care for others. We love you and praise you Lord. In Jesus name, Amen.

Victoria Spaniel (MTSU Wesley)

Wednesday, March 25

Open The Eyes of Your Heart

Read: Luke 1:26-33 Isaiah 7:10-14

Thought for the day: God has a message and a sign for all, but being patient with your opened mind and heart is the best way to receive that message.

There were two pieces of scripture that I read into and I found them both so compelling with how they related to each other. First, within Luke 1:26-33, Mary is visited by an angel who has come to inform her that she has been bestowed the greatest honor and blessing of carrying the son of God. The angel informs her to not be fearful, but to be joyous that such a wonderful thing shall become the very foundation of the path that she and Joseph shall walk together in order to bring the Messiah to this world. Then within Isaiah 7: 10-14, it discusses the sign of glory that is given by the Lord through Isaiah to the House of David, revealing that Jesus will be born by the virgin Mary. God has a way to give us signs of what He intends for us, even when we don't expect it and sometimes, even when we aren't looking for it.

I believe that many people tend to search too deeply or resist to search for the ways that God wants us to walk along the path most enlightened. For it is He who will be the one who guides us when we are both in need and ready in his eyes to move towards the next part of his plan for our lives. We should be grateful and compliant to listen to His word and take the great news of our path moving forward in life, for God knows us best. Mary took blind faith in the angel's word because her love and faith for God was stronger than any fear she might have had. We, as children of God, should also be fearless in the face of change and challenge as Mary was. God will always lead us to the path of good and light, so having complete trust and faith in his divine guidance is key to living a peaceful and harmonious life.

Prayer: Dear God, please help our hearts to be clear of the aches and our minds to be free of the clutter so that we may be fully focused on You and Your presence. Help us be in tune with Your love and word.

In your precious and holy name. Amen.

Melina DeGolyer (MTSU Wesley)

Thursday, March 26

Read Psalm 130

“Out of the depths, I call to you, Lord!... let your ears be attentive to my cry for help. Lord, if you kept an account of iniquities, Lord, who could stand?... I wait for the Lord; I wait and put my hope in His word.... For there is faithful love with the Lord, and with Him is redemption in abundance .”

More often than I would like to admit, it takes me incredibly too long to realize that I have put my focus on something, someone, or somewhere where it shouldn't be. Once I snap back to the fact that I've been following the wrong path, I come to consciousness with the reality that I'm as lost and out of control as a sailboat in the middle of the sea, alone, with a massive hole in the hull that is quickly filling up with water. There is only one thing to do in that situation; patch the hole and let the wind carry me home.

Graciously for us, God doesn't care how big that hole is that we have, or if we have one at all. He'll start carrying us anyway. It doesn't matter if it is the first, second, third, or ten-thousandth time that we have lost ourselves out at sea. The wind will never cease and neither will God. He and his grace are there time and time again to bring us back to the only thing that is true, and that's Him. All that we have to do is remember that the wind will carry us back to shore. Once we are there, God gives us the opportunity to burn the boat that we were lost on, and we don't have to look back anymore. We've returned to be with God and that's all he wants from us; to be with Him.

Thought of the Day: God will never stop carrying you home.

Prayer: Gracious and loving God, I confess that I have strayed away from your love, but I know that you have never left me. Forgive me for losing focus time and time again, and give me the strength to not look back on the wrong I've done. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Prayer Focus: Someone who has lost sight of God time and time again

Bobby Kerr (MTSU Wesley)

Friday, March 27

Redemption Starts with the Self, and Only Then can it Ripple Out

Scripture Reading: Ezekiel 33:10-16

If you, LORD, kept a record of sins,

Lord, who could stand?

But with you there is forgiveness,

so that we can, with reverence, serve you.

--Psalm 130:3-4 (NIV)

Thought of the Day:

What are the ways that I am keeping myself from God's grace, love, and mercy?

Something that I personally struggle with is that I am unable to be this picture perfect person, student, friend, and christian that I know is quite impossible to actually achieve. I struggle everyday with all the ways I mess up or I am not enough, and the ways that I create spaces that do not show God's grace, love, and mercy. I beat myself up everyday about the ways that I disappoint God and all the ways that I do not live into my faith and christian life and calling. But something that I recently came to terms with is that I am human and I am not meant to be perfect or achieve perfection. All I am asked to do by God is try my best and recognize when I fall short and need to ask God for forgiveness and guidance.

All God expects from us is to love each other and to recognize our own need for his grace and mercy. Furthermore, we cannot bring redemption into this world until we recognize our personal need for redemption. We have to fix the injustices within ourselves and the disservices we personally live in, so we can go out into the world and not only see, but understand those injustices and disservices beyond ourselves that so desperately not the love, mercy, and grace of God. We know the light of God through our personal redemption and forgiveness, so that we can go forth into the world and bring forth God's light into the places that his love is present but seems forgotten.

Prayer: Lord, I am imperfect and I fall short in many ways, but help me recognize my own shortcomings. I want to accept your grace and mercy, so that I then go forth into this world and help bring your love, grace, and mercy with me in everything I do. Amen.

Prayer Focus: Those who need to let go of their need for perfection so they can find peace.

-Erica Burton (MTSU Wesley)

Saturday, March 28

The Daily Examen

Read Psalm 130

The prayer of Examen is a spiritual practice that trains us to still our hearts and minds, reflect on the day/week/month/season that has just passed, and reset for the time to come. We have sprinkled this practice throughout this devotional guide to assist you in your journey through the season of Lent.

1. Become aware of God's presence: Lookback on the day and note the times you felt God was with you, assisting. Feel God with you now and ask to become more conscious of God's presence. It may be helpful to repeat a phrase like, "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10), or any other prayer that connects you to a Higher Power.
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3. Take an honest look at your day: Note everything that happened over the course of the past 24 hours, your interactions with others, and your emotions. We often rush through each day, not pausing to reflect. Doing a deep, honest reflection of the past day causes us to learn more about ourselves and improve our future actions.
4. Choose one part of the day, and pray about it: From doing your review, you might find something God is directing you to work on - an emotion, a relationship that needs mending, an unpleasant situation. Pray for it, ask God's guidance to resolve it.
5. Pray for tomorrow: Ask God to guide you tomorrow leading you to your highest purpose. Send love and light to tomorrow, praying for wisdom and strength. Feel deep gratitude, knowing God has already answered your prayer and tomorrow is already blessed. Take some deep breaths, and know that all is well.

Sunday, March 29

“Living for Spirit or Sin?”

Read: Romans 8:1-11

*Israel, put your hope in the Lord, for with the Lord is unfailing
love and with him is full redemption. He himself will
redeem Israel from all their sins.*

– Psalms 130:7-8 (NIV)

Life in college is both strangely freeing and challenging. When I entered college, I no longer lived under a structured set of rules created by my parents that told me how to live my life. I was now in charge of my decisions and with this new freedom came temptations from the world. Suddenly, I could decide where I wanted to go, at any time, and I didn't need permission from anyone. Of course, there are consequences with every decision. For example, if I decided to stay up all night hanging with my friends, I had absolutely no energy for class the next day. I was the one who had to keep myself accountable in doing my schoolwork. Eventually, I figured out the balance that is necessary in life. I had to discipline myself in deciding what was necessary versus what I simply wanted to do.

I feel like most people struggle to find the line between living your life for the world or living your life in the Word. God calls us to pursue him in our lives, and with this pursuit, we need to prioritize his will over our own desires of the world. In summary of Romans 8:6-11, Those who live for the flesh will die, but those who lives for the Spirit is life and peace. By living for the flesh, you cannot submit to God nor please him. If the Spirit of God lives in you however, you do not live in the flesh but in the Spirit. Even if our bodies die due to sin, the Spirit gives life because of His righteousness.

The pull to the desires of the world stems from wanting control in what we think we want. Whether that be fame, love, or happiness, we think we know the best way to earn these qualities. This is ridiculous because there is no greater fame then being known and loved by our Creator. We do not know what true joy is without God, so why do we try to find happiness from the flesh? God so desperately wants a relationship with us and with this relationship comes unconditional love and redemption from our sins.

Prayer: Dear Lord, living in this world is hard, but give us the strength to prioritize your will in our lives. Encourage us to push away our desires from the Flesh and guide us toward the will of the Spirit. In your loving and Holy name. Amen.

Kaylee Skipper (MTSU Wesley)

Prayer Focus: Those struggling to steer away from their worldly desires.

Monday, March 30

“Hold on to Hope”

Read Psalm 143

*“So my spirit grows faint within me;
my heart within me is dismayed.
I remember the days of long ago;
I meditate on all your works
and consider what your hands have done.”
Psalm 143: 4-5*

Life is hard. From the minor inconveniences of life to the funerals, the breakups, the endings. “Life is hard” is a phrase that we’ve all said for every scenario, and it’s 100% true. Especially as college students, it seems like it’s one thing after another in the midst of trying to figure out who we are. But one thing we can rest assured in is *whose* we are. Through the haze of assignments, exams, existential crises, highs, lows, laughter, tears, and everything in between, there is a God who loves us through every. single. moment. It’s so hard to believe, especially when it’s hard to even love ourselves. But, my friends, when you find yourselves overwhelmed and feeling hopeless, cling onto the powerful, magnificent, and unconditional love that Jesus has for YOU. Remember the mountains, the seas, the blades of grass, and know that the God who created those with his hands also designed you in his image. Remember the cross, the ultimate display of love, and know that Jesus died for YOU.

Thought for the Day: When your life feels like a roaring sea, remember that Jesus walks on water, and He has the power to lift you up.

Prayer: Jesus, as we go day in and day out of this semester, help us to remember your goodness. You are our protector, our stronghold, and you love us deeply. Thank you for the many blessings we have and thank you for being our hope. *Amen*

Prayer Focus: You, or someone around you who feels hopeless and overwhelmed with school, family, relationships, or other personal struggles.

Beverly Wilkinson (MTSU Wesley)

Tuesday, March 31

The Daily Examen

Read Psalm 143

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4. Choose one part of the day, and pray about it: From doing your review, you might find something God is directing you to work on - an emotion, a relationship that needs mending, an unpleasant situation. Pray for it, ask God's guidance to resolve it.
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Wednesday, April 1

Our Redeeming God

Jeremiah 32:1-9, 36-41

“I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob”? He is God not of the dead, but of the living.”

Matthew 22: 32

When I was in the midst of my college search, I really wanted to play soccer at a private Christian school. I went to ID camps, emailed coaches, and spent time everyday studying the game and improving myself. However, I was not in active relationship with God. I invested most of my time in soccer and other things that pleased me, neglecting my relationship with God. I lived a superficial, false relationship with Jesus as the figurehead and myself as the deity. Then, I suffered the first of three concussions in five months. It was in this time that I began walking more intentionally with God and responding to His call.

Looking at the nation of Israel in today’s scripture reading, we see a similar situation. God’s covenant people have forgotten God and are being overtaken by their enemies as a consequence of their actions. And God allows it. God doesn’t take away the consequences of our actions, but He remains faithful. He promises “never draw back from doing good to them” (Jeremiah 32:40). In the darkest depths of death and hopelessness our God redeems and resurrects His beloved.

Thought of the Day: God remains faithful regardless of my faithfulness.

Prayer of the Day: “For your name’s sake, O Lord, preserve my life. In your steadfast love cut off my enemies, and destroy all my adversaries, for I am your servant.” -Psalm 143:11-12

Prayer Focus: People in Transition

Daniel Phebus (MTSU Wesley)

Thursday, April 2

Faithful in Our Distress

Psalm 31:9-16

“I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.”

Philippians 1:6

Last summer I was flying back to the US from a mission trip in Africa. The team had a decent layover in Amsterdam, so we decided to explore the city. On our way back to the airport we realized we were about to miss our train back, so I began to run. I made it to the train. When I looked back I saw my group behind me, so I entered the train. Then the doors began to shut, but no more team members boarded. Then as the doors closed I began to see my group arrive. Then, whoosh, the train whizzes down the track, and I'm alone. When I arrived at the airport, I waited for the team nervously. I waited and waited finally realizing that I had only thirty minutes to get the security, go through customs, find my flight, and board the plane. So in an anxious frenzy I took off running. And by the grace of God, I made it. Right before the decision was made to stop boarding, I arrived. All that stress and anxiety melted away, and I knew that God had answered my nervous prayers.

In my distress the Lord was gracious to me. Even in an unfamiliar place, my times were in His hands. He gave me yet another example of His peace, power, and presence in my life.

Thought of the Day: God is faithful even in my distress.

Prayer of the Day: Lord, we are broken people in distress. Save us in your steadfast love. We trust in you. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Prayer Focus: Travelers

Daniel Phebus (MTSU Wesley)

Friday, 3 April

The Daily Examen

Read Psalm 31:9-16

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Saturday, April 4

“Hard Things”

Read: Mark 10:32-34 and Psalm 31:9-16

“55 I call on your name, Lord, from the depths of the pit.

56 Hear my voice. Don’t close your ear[a] to my need for relief, to my cry for help.[b]

57 Come near to me on the day I call to you. Say to me, “Don’t be afraid.”” – Lamentations 3:55-57

“God please come and help me, I am not strong enough,” are the words I hear when reading these passages. The feeling of depression, desperation, and simply needing help is not an unfamiliar one to me. Within the past six months I have changed my major, completely changed my career plans, and ended a 4-year long relationship. I’m sure all of you would agree that these are very hard things. My campus minister started a sort of mantra during a difficult 8-hour drive in December. “We can do hard things!” was repeated many times during that trip. Since then, that phrase has stuck in my mind.

The trick about “we can do hard things” is that we as Christians have to remember where we get the strength to do the hard things. I am reminded of this when reading the Psalm and Lamentations passages. The Psalmist eloquently describes how many of us feel when we go through hard things. We are depressed, grieving, sad, weak, and destroyed. We sometimes feel like the absolute lowest of the low. With typical Psalm fashion, the Psalmist goes in one verse from absolute existential dread to absolute faith. “I trust you, Lord... my future is in your hands... save me by your faithful love.” Through the last few verses of Psalm 31 we are reminded to TRUST our God because he is faithful.

Mark 10:32-34 is a perfect example of the trust we are to have in God during the hard times. Jesus reminds us in this passage of the horrors that he will soon face, harder things than many of us can even imagine. He ends with “after three days, he will rise up.” This to me shows the kind of hope, trust, and faith in God that we as Christians must lean on in order to keep our sanity. The lesson from these passages is this: It is okay to struggle with the hard things. It is okay to ask for help. The next step in our faith is to trust God with our hard things and know that he will somehow lead us through.

Thought for the day: How can you trust God with a hard thing today?

Prayer: God, help me to realize that I need you. Help me to understand that asking for help is not weakness; help me to know that you will carry me through. Amen.

Prayer Focus: Someone who needs healing.

Danielle Hartsin (UT Martin Wesley)

April 5: Palm Sunday

The Unknown leaves Room for God to Work

Scripture Reading: Matthew 21:1-11

*The LORD is God, and he has given us light.
Bind the festal procession with branches,
up to the horns of the altar. You are my God,
and I will give thanks to you; you are my God,
I will extol you. O give thanks to the LORD,
for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.*

loves

--Psalm 118:27-29 (NIV)

willing

Thought of the Day:

Remember that even in what may seem like darkness shrouding us, there is God's light and joy that encompasses us in his love. Center yourself for the coming week that reminds us of just how much he

us, and the heavy cost he was

to bear to gift us our purpose and callings as creations of the Lord!

As a children's church and Sunday school teacher, one of the things that Palm Sunday means for me is to keep the kids from smacking each other with the palm leaves and play interference in eye pointing fiascos. It makes me want to pull my hair out and frustrates me that I have to run after 4 year olds who want to play sword fights and pirates, but I honestly wouldn't change it for anything in the world. Hearing the excitement in those kids' voices about how that got to lay that palm leave down after walking up the aisle to the front. Nothing fills my heart more than when I'm teaching my lesson about what Palm Sunday is and why we remember and celebrate it and I get to watch those kids' eyes light up and proudly interrupts me, because they know the story and want to help tell it. Palm Sunday always reminds me to find my childlike joy and excitement in life even among the suffering.

I can't help but remember that during this celebration, in the excitement that Jesus knew what was going to happen in the coming days. The pain, betrayal, and suffering that was coming not only to him but those around him. Palm Sunday reminds me that we are given the gift of free will and ignorance about what the future holds. We fight against this because the unknown makes us uncomfortable and it leaves us without control. But doesn't our need for control get us into more trouble than not? We have to give up that control and give it back to God. That nasty voice that picks at us about all the things that could go wrong when we aren't in control is the thief of our joy and child-like wonder of the world. Your story is already written, and it simply says that you are a beloved child of the Lord and are commissioned to spread God's grace, mercy, and love. Remember that the unknown while uncomfortable, is a gift God has given us.

Prayer: Lord, help me find comfort in the unknown and peace in the uncomfortable. Help me be a vessel of your light, bringing your love with me in everything I do. Help me see the ways that you move in my life. Amen.

Prayer Focus: The areas in my life that I don't leave room for God's voice to be heard and him to work.

-Erica Burton (MTSU Wesley)

Monday, April 6

“In principio, et nunc, et semper, et in saecula saeculorum.”[1]

Reading these passages, my mind is at once drawn to the adage of a palm tree in a hurricane, bending and twisting, at the mercy of the winds. When most trees would snap, or be unearthed from the ground completely, the combination of unique, malleable cells in the tree itself and a particularly strong root system ensure that the palm trees last through the ages, through many a weathering storm.

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews—generally considered to be Saint Paul, though this has recently been called into question—clearly put the passages in conversation with Isaiah, particularly the those directly after the ones included above, Isaiah 43 and Hebrews 10. The obvious conclusion upon analysis of these is that the author is painting Jesus as the answer to the prophecies of Isaiah, therefore making the church the direct continuation of the true line of Judaism, and disregarding the religious establishment of the day. However, there is a much more significant point lying just below the surface.

Both of these passages focus on different themes and present them in different lights, and to different ends. Isaiah 42:1-9 seems to focus more on the future, saying “See, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare” (Isaiah 42:9), a sentiment quoted almost verbatim in Hebrews 10:9 (“See, I have come to do your will;’ He abolishes the first in order to establish the second.”). Likewise, Hebrews 9:11-15 focuses more on the past, looking back and making sense of the present through the lens of history, saying; “But when Christ came as a high priest of the good things *that have come*, then through the greater and perfect tent... he entered once and for all into the Holy Place *not with the blood of goats and calves*, but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption” (Hebrews 9:11-12, emphasis added).

This kind of back and forth between these texts emphasizes the plight of post-destruction Judaism and very early Christianity, making sense of the present through the past, and using the past to look forward to the future. Yet, at the center of this dialogue stands the true focus of the discourse, the mightiest of palm trees, unperturbed by the winds and storms of time: ultimate truth, and—to an even greater extent—our almighty, ever living, ever loving God, who holds the past, present, and future in His hands.

“Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.” – the Book of Common Prayer

Aaron Selby (MTSU Wesley)

[1] The traditional Ecclesiastical Latin for a portion of the prayer included from the Book of Common Prayer, roughly translating to “In the beginning, as it is now, and as it will be forever.”

Tuesday April 7

“Understanding That I don’t Understand”

Read: 1 Corinthians 1: 18-31

For you have been my hope, Sovereign Lord, my confidence since my youth. From birth I have relied on you; you brought me forth from my mother’s womb. I will ever praise you.

– Psalm 71:5-6 (NIV)

In my life and faith journey, God continues to remind me that my own human wisdom is not the guiding factor for prosperity. College is an environment where I am consistently challenged in more ways than I could ever have imagined. I have overcome growing pains, family illnesses, relationship challenges, doubts in faith, and so much more. Just as consistently as those things arise in my world, I start down the path of self-reliance for answers and guidance.

My frequent failures and lack of understanding always lead me back to depending on God’s wisdom and discernment. Though getting there may take longer than I’m willing to admit. When I finally give it all up to God and ask for help, I become so much stronger than before.

When we are faced with the trials of this world, God calls us to rely on him. On the surface, that seems like such a simple thing to accomplish. But we all know how hard it is to give up control.

Paul writes in verses 30 to 31, “He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and *righteousness* and *sanctification* and *redemption*, in order that, as it is written, ‘Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.’” This is a reminder of the transformative power of God, if only we would open our hearts and allow Him in.

Prayer: *God, when we are in the midst of challenges, hurt, and pain, we remember that you are our guide. In you we find understanding, peace, and comfort. Thank you for your continual wisdom and discernment as we go through life on this Earth. Amen.*

Prayer Focus: Seek peace, understanding, and guidance not from this world but from heaven.

Kayli Jones (MTSU Wesley)

Wednesday, April 8

What's Love Got to Do with it?

Read John 13:18-35

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders ... And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus... For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

– Hebrews 12:1-3 (NIV)

While developing my beliefs as a Christian in college, my Wesley foundation has touched on loving other people many, many times. I firmly agreed and advocated in loving every single person. I have told others we literally have the perfect template of what true love is because of all Jesus is. But the thing is, sometimes I made myself a hypocrite because I did not love every person I met. Some people are just rude, or socially inept, but guess what. We still must love them. They are still creations of our All-knowing, perfect God and He loves all of us the same.

In summary of John 13:18-35, Jesus predicts his betrayal and is literally sharing a meal with him. He is with his disciples and they beg to know which one of them it is. He knows Judas will betray him and instead of asking him to reconsider, he instead tells Judas to do it quickly. When Judas left to deceive him, Jesus claimed that the Son of Man and God are glorified in each other. Jesus finally tells his children that they cannot go where he is going, but there is a new command he gives. We are called to love each other as God has loved us. We show how we are disciples of Jesus, not by preaching the gospel, but by how we love His creation.

It is so much easier said than done to love everyone. Sure, it's easy to love our friends or people who are like us. It is a different story entirely to love someone who is mean or hateful towards us or those we easily love. But that is what it is like to Jesus loving those who crucified him. He loved and begged for mercy to those wronged him in the worst way. Of course, we aren't perfect like Jesus and will fall short in his will every day, but that does not mean we cannot try and be intentional with every interaction we have with other people. We show God's light the best when we love others.

Prayer: Dear heavenly Father, thank you for loving me past the many betrayals I have done to you. I fall short every day, but every day you continue to love me. Help me to love others as you have loved me. In your loving and Holy name. Amen.

Prayer Focus: Those who have difficulty in loving others or even themselves.

Kaylee Skipper (MTSU Wesley)

Thursday, April 9

“To Wash, To Feed, and To Love”

“12 After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? 13 You call me Teacher and Lord--and you are right, for that is what I am. 14 So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. 16 Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. 17 If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.” ~ John 13: 12-17

My grandfather was on hospice for a long time after he had his stroke. Everyday a nurse would come over and bathe him because he could not do that for himself. Many sinners don't even know they're broken and sometimes we must reach out to them. Many people don't even know how to bathe or cleanse themselves of their sins. Jesus tells them that he has set an example that all must follow. By blessing others, we ourselves become blessed! How great is that?

“23 For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” 25 In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”~ 1 Corinthians 11:23-25

The King of kings is our king and we are welcome to the feast of feasts. Everyone... Every single person in the entire universe has a place at his table. You will never be turned away, and you will always be welcome. The Lord KNEW that he would be betrayed and yet he sat down and he feasted because despite the fact that someone was standing behind with a knife all he knew was that this man deserved love anyway and was still welcome at his table. We remember this day. We rejoice in this day. And yet this was a day of struggle and turbulence. To me this says that no matter what you're and no matter what you're going through it's okay to sit down and feast.

There's a wonderful lady from my old church who would hug everyone. I don't think she ever forgot a single name or face. She would greet newcomers as if they were old friends. She would never seek anything in return she just wanted people to know that they are loved. John 13:34 says, *“I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”* God calls us to love one another and in return we shall be known as His.

A master is no better than a servant. A messenger is no better than the person that sent them. One person will never be any better than the one standing next to them. Everyone deserves to be loved, everyone deserves to be washed, and everyone deserves to be fed. Everyone deserves a chance to change. Everyone deserves love. I think that if we put these three things together, we can change the face of the universe. *To wash, to feed, and to love in the name of God is a miracle. And, it is what we are put here to do.*

Prayer: Dear Lord I pray that you help us to embrace your love in a way that we affect the lives of everyone around us. I pray that everyone comes to your table. And I pray that everyone gets a chance to be washed in your love. In the name of your most precious son, Amen.

Elizabeth Capps (MTSU Wesley)

Friday, April 10

Serve with Love

Read Isaiah 53:3-4

“He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hid their faces, he was despised, and we held him in low esteem. Surely, he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted.”

Driving through major cities can make anyone uneasy. The stifling traffic, smogginess, etc. But something I dread seeing is the amount of homeless or those in need of help standing at intersections with cardboard signs. I never have cash on me, and usually have no food or something of comfort to offer. But many times, it's comments of those in the car with me that make me ashamed or uncomfortable. We are so ready to accuse others of scamming or using donations for “unnecessary” things. Society has trained a lot of us to turn our heads away, ignore, and don't make eye contact. But just as the above reading states, these are God's servants, his children as much as we are. They are persecuted, ignored, and know pain just as much as any of us.

Hebrews 4:15 - “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet he did not sin.”

As Christians, as humans, we are not and cannot be shy to our own suffering, and the suffering of this world. Those who have fallen, God uses us to pick back up again. Just as he has used others to help us in our time of need.

Prayer: Almighty and most merciful God, we remember before you all poor and neglected persons whom it would be easy for us to forget: the homeless and the destitute, the old and the sick, and all who have none to care for them. Help us to heal those who are broken in body and spirit, and to turn their sorrow into joy. Grant this Father, for the love of your son, who for our sake became poor, Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Thought of the Day: Acknowledgement and being met with love and grace is a great place to start when you don't know what to say or do.

Mary McAuliffe (MTSU Wesley)

Saturday, April 11

Distractions from the Call to Love

Read: Psalm 31: 1-4, 15-16 and 1 Peter 4:1-8

Devotion: I have an obsession with Pinterest. It's my go-to place for text posts, fan art, and memes about TV shows, books, movies, and musicals. When I started writing this devotional, my best friend Kylie and I were talking about what we were going to give up for Lent. After some deliberation, I decided on giving up Pinterest. It's a huge part of my life. Whenever I have free time or am done taking notes from a slide in class, there's a 95% chance I'm on Pinterest. I chose it because I feel as if it's distracting me from God and the education that I need to fulfill His plan for me.

I'm sure there's at least one thing that distracts each one of us from God. Whether it's a certain social media app like me or school and the stress of making a good grade in a hard class, everyone has something that distracts them from what God is doing in their lives.

The verses from Psalms are asking God to rescue, free, and deliver us from our enemies and the things that hold us back from Him. While He will save us when we ask Him to, that doesn't mean we get a free pass to act however we want and still constantly be distracted. The verses from 1 Peter describe our job as Christians: to teach the Gospel to those who hate us for not joining "in their reckless, wild living" (verse 4) and to love everyone. If we're still distracted from God, we won't hear when He tells us to share His love to those around us. As Lent comes to a close, I challenge you to identify one thing that you feel distracts you from God and work on limiting its presence in your life. If you feel like you need to keep limiting whatever you gave up for Lent, that's great! Keep on focusing on God. If you feel like there's something else you need to limit in your life, that's fine as well! It'll be rough at first, but through Him, you can do it!

Thought for the Day: God will save us from everyone and everything that gets in the way of our relationship with Him, but we also need to actively work on diminishing the presence of those things in order to hear His calling to spread love to those around us.

Prayer: Lord, I thank You that You will always save me from those against me. Please help me to find something that distracts me from You and also please help me in fighting that distraction. I want to hear Your instructions for me in my life. In Jesus's name, Amen.

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