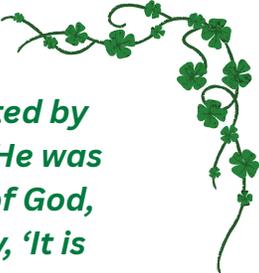




Westover Reflections - March 2026



“At that time Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards He was hungry. The tempter approached Him and said, ‘If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.’ He said in reply, ‘It is written: One does not live by bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” -Matthew 4:1-4

As you receive this **March** newsletter, I should have already preached on this passage, since **22 February** was the **First Sunday in Lent**, and as the Desert/Wilderness Temptation story is generally the Gospel passage for the beginning of this journey toward the cross and Easter Sunday, which happens to be on **Sunday, 5 April**, this year.

Pondering on this passage, as I sit ***chilled to the bone*** in my office, on a cold February morning, while looking ahead and considering what to say in the preached word, it occurs to me that the whole story is found ***in a nutshell***, if one remembers the passage from **Romans 5** wherein the Apostle Paul writes, ***“Just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so, through the obedience of the One, the many will be made righteous.”***

The Apostle is reminding us of the time when Eve and Adam, in the Garden, took possession of the fruit that gave the knowledge of good and evil. You see, they wanted to have a good thing-wisdom-without the relationship with God that makes it good. Jesus, going into the desert, was offered food, protection, and lordship. These are ***good things*** that God promises to Him and to us, but **Jesus refused** to accept them **without** the relationship with His Father.

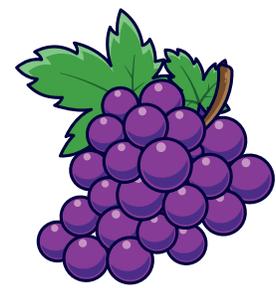
Listen, my friends! In making my Lenten ***“sacrifices”***-no sweets, Cheetos/chips, processed foods-during this Lenten journey, I got to thinking to myself: ***“Wait, just a minute, William!”*** “(Yes, I am the one who stands in front of the mirror and says, ***“I find myself talking to myself a lot lately,”*** while hearing the mirror respond, ***“I do, too.”***)

“Wait, just a minute, William!” The fundamental reorientation of Lent is not about becoming a better person, **but rather**, about living into Christ. When we hunger, when life seems barren... **we are in the desert with Christ**, who was hungry. When our lives are full of fruit, we are in the Garden, and Lent, my friends, reminds us to love the Garden more than the fruit.

When we do not know what to say, we take the Words of this Holy Writ upon our lips, just as Jesus did. When we look at the kingdoms of the world, we remember that they **cannot compare** to the One true King, who sits on Heaven’s throne. When we have moments of failure, **we acknowledge** our weaknesses and ask Christ Jesus to cover our sins with His obedience, as we rely on His amazing grace that brings us through those desert moments of life and leads us beside the still waters.

Still in His Peace,
William

First Fruits of Worship
by Bruce Smith, Director of Music Ministries



Song Story: “Amazing Grace
(My Chains Are Gone)”

“My chains are gone, I’ve been set free!”

There are contemporary songs written to elevate the heart and soul in worship, and there are great hymns of the church which stir and humble our hearts in worship. The true genius of God’s creation of music, is when one can take the greatest hymns and “add” contemporary music to them, creating something more moving to the heart than either style alone can. Such is the case with Chris Tomlin’s stunning “Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone)”.

Chris Tomlin, one of the most prolific contemporary worship music composers of this age, reflected recently “In the beginning, I never set out to take the hymn ‘Amazing Grace’ and add something to it – anybody would be crazy to do that! It’s only the greatest song ever written.” But the story of how he embarked on this song adventure is as “amazing” as the title the song suggests.

Tomlin tells the story of a chance encounter on a plane ride with a friend who told him about some friends who were making a movie about William Wilberforce called “Amazing Grace”. Tomlin’s friend wondered if Chris might be willing to “do something” with the hymn of the same name.

It’s important to know who William Wilberforce is, at this point. Wilberforce was a powerful British abolitionist in 1785 and beyond. He successfully introduced antislavery legislation in England and helped to end the slave trade activities in his home country. His mentor and Pastor during that period was John Newton, the composer of “Amazing Grace”. Newton was a former slave trader who repented and shared his conversion story with Wilberforce.

It is that connection between Newton and Wilberforce, that struck Chris Tomlin when he did his research before composing this refrain for “Amazing Grace. He thought of those slaves brought over on ships in chains and the ransom that was paid for a slave, and how John Newton also wrote this hymn from his experience as a slave trader that caused Tomlin to write these words...

“My chains are gone, I’ve been set free! My God, my Savior has ransomed me”

Tomlin says “And so I wrote that little refrain, and started singing it out to the hymn, never thinking it was going to do anything. I sent it to the film makers saying, ‘Hey, if you want to use this for the movie, that’d be great’, never dreaming that churches would adopt this version of ‘Amazing Grace’. So I count it an incredible privilege to be in a long line of people who’ve sung this song.”

The song was used in the 2007 film “Amazing Grace” about the life of William Wilberforce. And, no less grand, it has become one of the most impactful and popular contemporary hymns of the modern church.

“And like a flood, His mercy reigns unending love, amazing grace!”



Easter Egg Hunt

Wow, it's almost time for the children's Easter Egg Hunt! The egg hunt party will start at 10:00 AM on Saturday, April 4. We'll be stuffing eggs at craft circle on March 7. Candy donations are welcome and very appreciated!! We also need volunteers on April 4 to tell the Easter story, lead a craft and to help hide eggs. Please contact Sharron Gibson if you want to join the fun!



Game night

Make plans for game night on Friday, March 20. Dinner will be served at 6:30 PM, followed by games. We'll have our usual Bingo with prizes, but welcome any other games that you may want to share! Hope to see you all there!



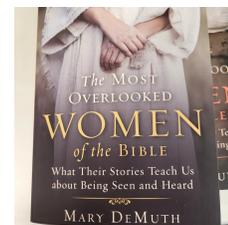
Craft circle



This month our "craft" will be stuffing Easter eggs for the children's egg hunt. We have toys and trinkets for the eggs, but welcome donations of candy, too. **Everyone** is invited to the Wesley Hall at 10:00 AM on Saturday, March 7! Bring your lunch and we'll also enjoy food and fellowship together about noon.

United Women of Faith Book Study

We will finish up our current book study with "Phoebe" on March 7 at 12:30 PM. Our next book will be The Most Overlooked Women of the Bible by Mary DeMuth. This book is available with a discount for multiple copies on Amazon. Contact Clara Worsley if you are interested in group ordering.



Sunday School

New month, new book for the adult Sunday school class. On March 1, we will start the study of Luke. Come join us!

Thank you!

What a great turnout for our "souper" bowl lunch--SO many friends and so much delicious soup & chili to sample. A "souper" size thank you to all who donated soup for our blessing box!



United Methodist Men BBQ

UMM are planning their annual BBQ on May 22. This is a big event, so we need *everyone's* help. The UMM will need people to help the day of the event and to make desserts ahead of time. Please contact Les Watkins if you can volunteer.

Happy birthday to:

- 3 Margaret Daniels
- 13 Barbara Epley
- 16 Samantha Price Gradle
- 18 Deloris Garska
- 20 Ed Worsley
- 20 Michael Marshall
- 30 Stephen Adebisi
- 31 Bobby Massengill
- 31 Robert Daniels



Mark your calendars:

- Saturday, March 7 Craft Circle (Easter egg filling) 10:00 AM
- Saturday, March 7 lunch 12:00 PM
- Saturday, March 7 UWF 12:30 PM
- Friday, March 20 Dinner & game night 6:30 PM
- Thursday, April 2, Maundy Thursday
- Saturday, April 4 Easter Egg Hunt 10:00 AM
- Sunday, April 5 Easter Sunday
- Friday, May 22 UMM BBQ

Ideas or feedback for newsletter? Please contact Sharron Gibson at Sharron.Gibson9194@gmail.com.



Easter Egg Hunt

1,000+ eggs

Lunch

**SATURDAY, APRIL 4
10:00 AM**

Westover United Methodist Church
300 Powell Drive
Raleigh NC



Easter story

Craft

