

Grace Devotion

Week of February 25, 2024

Fred Young

My very first Mission Trip in parish ministry sent me to Daytona, Florida with about 20 teenagers and 8 adults. We were a part of the rebuilding efforts of Daytona following the multiple hurricanes that tore through the area in 2004. When our team was not replacing roofs or helping to clean out a local church, we could be found at the Halifax Urban Ministry's Soup Kitchen, serving lunch to the local homeless population. This is where we met our friend, Robert. Robert was a former client of Halifax but returned to help at the soup kitchen every day as a way to repay them for the help he had received.

Robert performed the same task for each meal. He stood at the end of the serving line and passed the full tray of food to everyone as he looked into their eyes, and said, "God Bless you!" To this day, his kindness and love remains one of the most powerful examples of following Christ's mission that I have ever witnessed.

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He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

Mark 8:34

The Gospel lesson from Mark speaks of Jesus calling us into true discipleship. Hurdling obstacles and overcoming doubts to pick up our cross and follow Christ without question. Not an easy task for anyone. But before we get to the nuts and bolts of how we accomplish this life changing alteration, we hear about the "who" and "why" we would bother. Jesus asks his disciples, "Who do

people say that I am?" Finally, Peter answers, "*You are the Messiah!*" Within the next few verses, we hear why we follow. Jesus lays it all out before them, the events leading up to his arrest in the garden, the anguish of Good Friday, the grief of leaving his body in the tomb, and the miracle and mystery of Easter morning. Because our Messiah suffered, died, and was resurrected, so we may continue to live. Jesus was aware of his cross, his calling! It is Peter, Christ's most passionate follower, who is not willing to sacrifice his friend.

Mark invites us to help Jesus. To put down all the things in life that keep us from noticing each other's needs. Robert knew what it was like to feel hungry, cold and abandoned. He helped Jesus by assuring others that they were feed, warm and wanted. Mark's Jesus invites us to trust in God.

Happy Lenten journey!



Things to Consider:

1. How do you serve others?
2. How have others served you?
3. Where do you see Jesus in both of these?

PRAYER: Forgiving and life giving God, wash our hearts and give us the courage needed to share our love with others. Amen.

Announcements

Congregational Meeting 3/3/24 @11am

~Reminder: We are not using printed envelopes for offerings in order to save money and paper. You may pick up a packet of envelopes in the Gathering Place for either monthly or weekly contributions.

~To be good stewards of God's earth, we are recycling paper and plastic. Please look for the recycling paper containers at both entrances. Feel free to put any unwanted bulletins in these containers. The container for plastic bottles will be in The Gathering Place.

Grace Outreach Activities

~Today, immediately after the worship service, there will be a gathering for anyone interested in signing cards for any Grace off-site saints, college students and those serving in the military.

General pledge January 2024:	\$5,092
General pledge January 2023:	\$7,001
YTD income:	\$11,960
YTD expenses:	\$15,827
YTD deficit:	\$3,867

~**Goody Bags:** The Outreach Committee will be collecting snack items such as small bags of chips, pretzels, crackers, candy, etc. to be placed in bags and given to area police and fire departments, school bus companies, and hospital ER. There is a collection box in the hall across from the elevator for anyone who may be interested in donating. The bags will be assembled Saturday March 23 at 10 AM.

~**March Film:** This 2014 film is about the clash of two cultures and how the people are able to work out their differences. The film will be shown Friday March 8 in Fellowship Hall. The film will start at 3 PM and doors will be locked at 3:15. The film is rated PG and runs 122 minutes. Snacks provided.

Voices

and

Choices



Grace United Church of Christ

100 Fourth Street

Hanover, Pennsylvania 17331

717-632-1146

~ The Prayer Line 717-634-8865 is the number to call in case of inclement weather (and also Facebook).

February 25, 2024 ~ Second Sunday of Lent

Welcome/Announcements

Westminster Chimes

Prelude

**Song: “Open the Eyes of My Heart” ~ Michael Smith*

** Call to Worship

Lector: We come from busy work and retirement,

All: From quiet moments and noisy responsibilities.

One: We come with our joys and concerns,

All: With selfish expectations and weak excuses.

One: We come seeking forgiveness and healing

All: to draw closer to God, to hear the voice of Jesus, and to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

** Opening Prayer:

Dear Lord, Creator God, We come to you this second Sunday in Lent, seeking your forgiveness, your wisdom, and your guidance as we journey to the cross. Let us hear the voice of Jesus calling us to take up our cross and follow him. Send the Holy Spirit to empower us in furthering your kingdom. Be with us, Triune God, as we worship, confess, receive forgiveness, and are renewed to praise, to serve and to make choices based on love. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

** Sharing the Peace of Christ

Joys and Concerns
Prayer of Confession/Praying for Others
Lord’s Prayer (debts/debtors)
Silent Reflection/Assurance of Grace

** Affirmation of Faith:***

~We believe in God: who is present, in every time and in every place, generating and sustaining all life and seeking a relationship with all creation.

~We believe in Jesus, the Christ, who lived and loved, taught and died; the one who conquered sin and death.

~We believe in the Holy Spirit, who journeys with us and makes our faith possible, in every situation and every circumstance.

~We believe that every place we pause to recognize the mystery of our Triune God, is a sacred place, from sanctuaries to sunrises to hospital rooms to our places of work and fellowship. Surely, God is with us in every time and in every place, and in our daily walks with Christ, especially during Lent, and we are grateful, humbled, and blessed.

** Hymn: “Lift High the Cross”

Thank you for sharing your tithes and offerings

** “Doxology”

**Prayer of Dedication

Poem: “Choice”

Scriptures: Psalm 22:23-31 (NRSV); Mark 18:31-38 (NRSV)

Time for the Young at Heart

Hymn: (Seated) “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross”

185

Message: “Voices and Choices”

**Song: “Rescue” ~ Lauren Daigle *

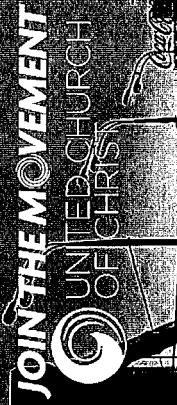
** Final Blessing

* “A Choral Benediction” (Inside front of hymn book/screen)

Postlude: “Passacaglia” ~ Gordon Young

*On the screen ** Please stand, if you are able.

**Adapted from Jerie Lukefahr, Commissioned Ruling Elder (PCUSA) and loosely based on Gen 28:10-19



W O K E L E N T 2 0 2 4

F R O M I M A I N E A P O L I S I N G T O J O B E U R N E Y

MONDAY FEB 26
REFLECTION
CALLED TO ACTION

"White Christians must invest in repairing race-based economic inequities in the church. Many churches in Black, Indigenous, Asian and Latinx communities need additional resources for their ministries to thrive. Present-day white Christianity needs a spiritual investment from BIPOC churches to be healed from the genetic imprint of racism. The church needs relational reciprocity like that initiated in the first century by the apostle Paul. This is the economics of racial equity."

Chapter 5: The Economics of Racial Equity, 42-43.

TUESDAY FEB 27
PRACTICE
RECIPROCITY AUDIT

Do an individual and/or community/church reciprocity audit. Make a list for yourself/your community: who do you lean on/support? Make another list for yourself/ your community: who leans on/ supports you? Explore the places where those lists overlap and where they don't. Notice if and how race and ethnicity (and class, gender, sexuality, ability etc.) play a role in these dynamics. Where and how can you increase mutual relationships (more overlap between your lists)?

SATURDAY MAR 2

PRACTICE EXAMEN

- (1) Acknowledge an awareness of the Divine.
- (2) Review the day in a posture of gratitude.
- (3) Recognize a moment where you were acting /living in full alignment with your values. Recognize a moment where you were not acting /living in full alignment with your values.
- (4) Choose a moment of misalignment to pray into.
- (5) Look with hope for a new tomorrow.

WEDNESDAY FEB 28
REFLECTION

ACTION

Take some time to learn about and discover how the member of the House of Representatives that represents you has voted on H.R. 40: Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans Act. Pray for them. Discern what your next steps might be, including contacting them to discuss their position and let them know how your faith connects you to this issue.

THURSDAY FEB 29
REFLECTION
CALLED TO ACTION

"With the Syrophoenician woman! Jesus did not depart from or diminish his [oppressed] identity while in a [dominant] space. Jesus challenged her sensibilities, her parochialism, and her privilege. Could she understand what is needed to liberate oppressed people? ...The woman's response was, "Yes Lord..." She persisted! She did not leave the conversation, nor did she get defensive...She did not argue that as a person of privilege she deserved his attention - or that he was being unfair... She said in essence, while the oppressed must be your priority, we... also need liberation and healing...Even those benefiting from systems of oppression need reconciliation."

SUNDAY MAR 3

INTENTION

Our wilderness wandering this Lent invites us to take stock, deepen our commitment, and find sustenance for our work of racial justice. Take a moment at the start of your week to set an intention for your journey in the coming days. What do you want to do or be this week as you risk being woke? If it's helpful, use the prompt "This week/Lent, I am a commitment to..."

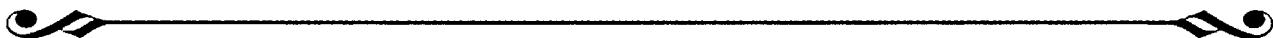
Chapter 4: Discussing Race in Dominant Spaces, 30-31.



Second Sunday in Lent, February 25, 2024

Scripture Reading: Mark 8:31-38

The most important stuff in this life ... can't be found in the stuff of this life.
—James Laurence



In today's Bible reading, Jesus offers a life lesson which might help us decide whether following Jesus is something we want to do: "For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life?" (vv. 35-36).

When people were asked about what they thought were the most important life lessons to remember, the answers varied. They include:

*Forgiveness is the key
Life is all about the journey
Everyone deserves a second chance
Believe in yourself; if you don't, no one will
Face your fears
Treat other people as you want to be treated
Take chances
There are no mistakes, only lessons
Our attitude toward life will determine life's attitude toward us
Sowing gratitude reaps gratitude
Patience is a virtue*

These are not bad ideas at all. They are good ideas. But Jesus cuts closer to the heart. He encourages us *to lose our lives*. We probably wouldn't like it if someone said to us, "Get lost!" But this is what Jesus says to us, "Stop being egocentric. Life is not all about you! Lose your consciousness of self. Lose your absorption in self. Abandon yourself. And when you lose your life in this sense, you will then find it!"

Don't understand? Think of those who "get lost" in their pursuit of music — the concert piano, the tenor sax, the cello. Or that person who lives to paint or write. The wonderful thing about losing your life, is that you *love* your life in losing it, and this in turn brings you joy!

—Timothy Merrill

Prayer: Lord Jesus, I will lose my life, and follow you. Amen.

HOME TOUCH® Activity Page

Week of February 25, 2024

Daily Bible Readings

- Sunday:** Romans 1-4
Monday: Romans 5-8
Tuesday: Romans 9-11
Wednesday: Romans 12-16
Thursday: Proverbs 1-3
Friday: Proverbs 4-7
Saturday: Psalms 19-21

Verse to Remember

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, ... nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

—Romans 8:38-39 NIV



WORD LIST

Covenant
Delight
Discipline
Evil
Father
Fool
Forsake
Fountain
Fruit
Heart
Honest
Humble
Insight
Listen
Lord
Love
Neighbor
Path
Pleasant
Poverty
Protect
Rebuke
Sleep
Son
Teaching
Tongue
Walk
Wisdom
Youth

PROVERBIAL WORDS

Find and circle the words listed in the column to the left in the WORD SEARCH grid to the far left. These words are all taken from Proverbs 1-7 of the readings this week. Remember to look for words vertically, horizontally, diagonally, forward and backward.

BUSINESS CARD

Can you match the name and job title that might have appeared on the business card of these people in the Bible? For example, Peter/ Fisherman.

- | | |
|---------------|------------------|
| 1. Nehemiah | A. Priest |
| 2. Luke | B. Carpenter |
| 3. Amos | C. Cupbearer |
| 4. Matthew | D. Cloth seller |
| 5. Lydia | E. Physician |
| 6. Joseph | F. Shepherd |
| 7. Paul | G. Tax collector |
| 8. Cornelius | H. Tailor |
| 9. Tabitha | I. Silversmith |
| 10. Demetrius | J. Soldier |
| 11. Eli | K. Tentmaker |

ANSWERS:
1C, 2E, 3F,
4G, 5D, 6B,
7K, 8J, 9H,
10I, 11A

SECOND SUNDAY



The right reaction to unfair criticism

"God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are my followers." – Matthew 5:11

The famous English evangelist George Whitefield learned that it was more important to please God than men. With full confidence that he was honoring the Lord, Whitefield endured scathing letters accusing him of wrongdoing. However, there was one particular letter he felt warranted a response.



His reply was brief and courteous, "I thank you heartily for your letter. As for what you and my other enemies are saying against me, I know worse things about myself than you will ever say about me. With love in Christ, George Whitefield."

George Whitefield wasn't concerned about pleasing people or defending himself. He was unapologetically sold out to the cause of Christ and knew he would receive criticism for it.

Serving the Lord wholeheartedly will often lead to criticism. One reason for this is that when people see God using others in a powerful way, they'll often feel convicted, and perhaps even threatened, about their own relationship with God. This spirit of jealousy causes many to react negatively.

So what's the right reaction? It's to respond in a loving way to any criticism you receive. Hear it out and be willing to admit if you're wrong. Handle criticism with a humble and gracious spirit and trust God to bring the truth to light!

Prayer Challenge

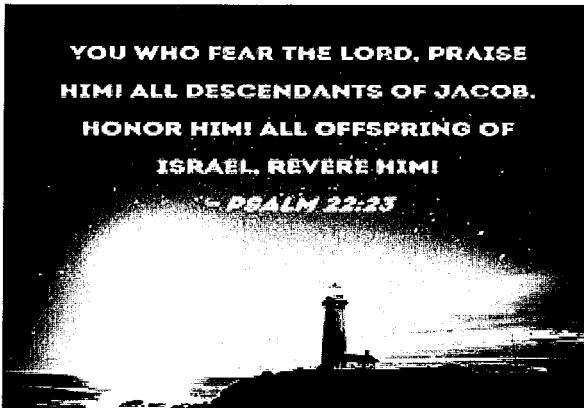
Ask God to give you a spirit of grace and humility when dealing with others who criticize you unfairly.

Questions for thought

Have you ever been unfairly criticized for doing what's right? What happened? How did you respond?

What does a grace-focused and Spirit-led response look like in situations like that?

Psalms 22:23-31



A	W	W	K	U	J	G	U	R	J	Q	X	L	Y	K	D	X	D	F	C
W	J	D	S	T	N	A	V	R	E	S	D	B	Z	X	Z	E	Y	X	C
G	J	L	R	R	V	Z	C	P	P	X	T	U	O	W	S	V	H	Z	M
H	Z	U	L	X	I	X	N	O	H	Q	T	C	X	C	Z	M	G	Q	J
B	R	Y	I	J	D	L	F	B	B	S	K	P	E	K	B	L	R	T	M
R	X	S	Z	L	O	C	R	V	M	X	J	N	Z	L	D	J	Q	D	P
A	O	J	V	S	H	H	D	X	P	Q	D	I	F	M	G	S	H	O	I
L	R	N	A	M	B	N	I	S	R	A	E	L	D	N	Q	E	V	V	Q
G	W	Q	O	J	O	A	T	C	N	X	G	J	N	N	C	T	N	C	E
W	O	R	S	H	I	P	T	T	F	A	N	P	Q	E	R	O	N	G	I
K	R	D	V	V	F	T	S	X	A	S	R	J	M	Z	E	A	C	T	I
T	R	P	A	S	L	O	U	Y	V	A	N	E	U	R	D	Z	P	I	H
Y	V	P	F	R	P	B	F	S	I	O	I	A	T	H	B	P	I	D	K
Z	N	U	X	O	J	Q	F	S	R	F	J	B	U	J	W	D	N	A	I
O	Y	K	O	K	C	N	E	I	D	B	S	X	B	P	G	W	L	J	W
A	W	Q	J	C	D	J	R	P	D	O	S	Q	B	D	X	I	T	V	X
T	B	Y	V	I	Z	M	I	V	T	L	X	F	E	K	F	T	F	Q	K
S	I	W	K	W	S	U	N	F	J	D	I	K	N	B	F	L	V	Q	E
M	P	J	Y	R	R	N	G	Q	R	J	W	W	T	Q	N	H	K	R	W
A	U	P	L	H	K	X	G	Z	T	D	I	N	H	F	Y	Q	M	C	U

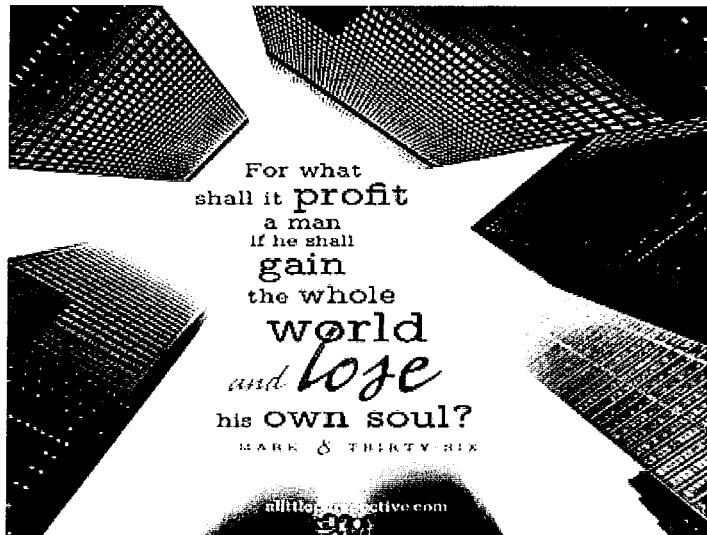
DESCENDANTS
JACOB
SUFFERING

HONOR
NEGLECT
WORSHIP

IGNORE
PRAISE

ISRAEL
SERVANTS

Mark 8:31-38



S S
L A I A
S M J B M T
B O F R V Q I L
I G M L M F S E G F
M E W G K X J Z J Q C O
J B A Z V R J S S Z Q H X D
C J V K N P E L C E A L I S K O
T N A G U S U G D R M Y I A U J G B
O Q A K P Y Y F A H E A L F D S H C X E
Y E T F R H V K I C B V O G D E H F S N
A A P I B M Y N A U O H J C J K E B
S P E R E T E P K B C J V C L M
S S M N W H G E B N P O P I
T E O C Y X Z L V D I Z
T H W H I F Q B C V
E Y D I D R S P
A G X E I D
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