

Grace Devotion

Week of March 10, 2024

Pastor Fred Young

Psalm 23

A David Psalm

GOD, my shepherd! I don't need a thing.
You have bedded me down in lush meadows,
you find me quiet pools to drink from.
True to your word, you let me catch my breath
and send me in the right direction.
Even when the way goes through
Death Valley, I'm not afraid when you walk at my side.
Your trusty shepherd's crook makes me feel secure.
You serve me a six-course dinner
right in front of my enemies.
You revive my drooping head;
my cup brims with blessing.
Your beauty and love chase after me
every day of my life. I'm back home in the house of GOD
for the rest of my life.

The Message

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Although Psalm 23 is not within our lectionary for this week, I often think of this familiar text going hand and hand with John 3:16 *"For God so loved that world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life."* These intimate words and those of Psalm 23, offer comfort and reassurance, but the psalmist's words also follow the lament and anguish found in Psalm 22, and it's first words, *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"* The same which Jesus cried out from the cross. Divine goodness and love follow, Jesus, the early disciples and all God's sheep.



Psalm 23 is rooted in real-life circumstances, even for the modern day believer. It prompts us to face our enemies and life's trials and tribulations head on, rather than avoiding them. God's goodness and mercy never simply follow at a distance, and certainly they do not maintain some kind of holding pattern until we breathe our last breath. Instead, God's goodness and mercy pursue us, actively seeking to engage us and refresh our lives, no matter what!

The shepherd's voice is one of promise, protection, sustenance, and care. What does your Shepherd's voice sound like to you? What does our shepherd's care look like? What promise does it speak? What is the Shepherd calling you to do? What role will you play in offering your praises?

PRAYER

You watch over your creation, as a shepherd with whom all living things are safe.

You know us all and keep us wherever we move.

O God, do this, we ask you, all the days of our lives:

May we never want and may we enter your rest and know your peace,
today and every day of our lives. Amen.

*Prayer of Dedication
**As change takes place for good,
may our gifts be blessed, and your children restored.
Amen.**

SERVICE OF COMMUNION
INVITATION (Screen)
WORDS OF INSTITUTION (Screen)
PRAYER OF CONSECRATION
SHARING OF THE BREAD AND CUP
*PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING (Screen)

**Song “Rescue” ~Lauren Daigle

**FINAL BLESSING
** “A Choral Benediction”

*POSTLUDE

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**Today’s Worship Elements have been adapted from the following
resource:**

Opening Prayer

The United Church of Christ Book of Worship. New York. 1986.

Call to Worship, Prayer of Confession and Assurance of Grace

Written by the Rev. Madison Shockley, pastor of Pilgrim United Church of
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ProgressiveChristianity.org.

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services of worship or church education. All publishing rights reserved.

Prayers to Share Year B: David Sparks. Woodlake Books. 2002.

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March 10, 2024 – 4th Sunday of Lent

Gathering Music

Welcome/Announcements

Westminster Chimes/Prelude ~Peyton Small

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

****CALL TO WORSHIP**

God is good; God’s steadfast love lasts forever.

We know it, we believe it, we proclaim it!

God is good; God’s steadfast love lasts forever.

Those who thirst for new life are satisfied;

Those who hunger for the living Word are filled!

God is good; God’s steadfast love lasts forever.

**The imprisoned ones know freedom; sinners know
pardon!**

God is good; God’s steadfast love lasts forever.

**The powerful are humbled; the needy are raised up from
their distress!**

God is good!

God’s steadfast love lasts forever!

****Opening Prayer**

**You are with us as we go with Jesus toward Jerusalem,
most gracious God, and we are thankful. You constantly
remind us of what sustains us as a faith community. You
help us understand your realm of love and justice
beyond this church. You are present as we walk beside**

**the cross-carrying Jesus and remind us of the demanding
call to discipleship. Most gracious God, stay with us!
Amen.**

****Hymn** “What Wonderful Love Is This” #177

****Sharing the Peace of Christ**

Prayer of Confession (Screen)
(Moment of Silent Prayer)
ASSURANCE OF GRACE (Screen)

Joys and Concerns

Prayer/Lord’s Prayer (debts/debtors)

SPECIAL MUSIC: “Gabriel’s Oboe/How Great Thou Art”
~Peyton Small

A TIME FOR THE YOUNG AT HEART

POEM: “Come to the Light”

SCRIPTURES

Psalms 107:1-3, 17-22 (Screen)

John 3:14-21 (Screen)

SERMON

****HYMN** “Lead Me to Calvary” #176

****The Apostle’s Creed** (Screen)

Thank you for sharing your tithes and offerings
****Doxology**

Come to the Light

But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God. John 3:21

The little boy awoke at night;
His nightmares were a tomb.
He cried, "Mommy, turn on the light!"
His sobs filled up the room.
She entered quickly, the light turned on,
And held him to her breast.
The demons suddenly were gone,
And little Tim could rest.

Our lives can also be possessed
With demons, dark and dire,
With issues we have not addressed;
We're plagued by vain desire.
We need a light along life's way
To make us feel secure,
To turn those nights into the day,
To peace and rest assure.

That light is Christ, our Savior dear,
Who came to set us free
From all those monsters that we fear,
New life to guarantee.
We need not dread life's many tests
Nor nightmares in the night,
For Christ will give us peace and rest,
If we come to the Light. Patti Miller

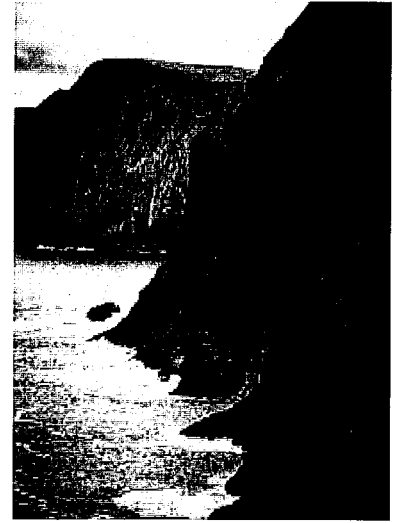


The key to outliving yourself

Now that I am old and gray, do not abandon me, O God. Let me proclaim your power to this new generation, your mighty miracles to all who come after me. — : Psalm 71:18

“American history shall march along that skyline,” announced Gutzon Borglum in 1924 as he gazed at the Black Hills of South Dakota. It was three years later that he began sculpting the images of George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Jefferson, and Theodore Roosevelt on the face of Mount Rushmore.

Working with jackhammers and dynamite, Borglum’s team removed around 400,000 tons of outer rock, working to within three inches of the final surface. Sadly, Borglum died in March of 1941. His masterpiece was finally finished years later.



It’s been said, “The true meaning of life is to plant trees under whose shade you do not expect to sit.” Some of the greatest visionaries who have ever lived never got to see their visions take shape. Instead, they had a vision so big that just achieving it took longer than the remainder of their lives.

If you want to leave an impact on this world, do something that will outlive you. That doesn’t mean you have to carve a mountain. But you can invest in others’ lives and lead them in truth. When you start living beyond yourself, there’s no limit to what God can accomplish through you!

Prayer Challenge

Pray and ask God to show you where you can make an investment today that will outlive your years on this earth.

Questions for thought

When you think about people who’ve had an impact that lasted beyond their years, who comes to mind?

What was it about those people that you think caused them to leave such a powerful legacy?

Fourth Sunday in Lent, March 10, 2024

Scripture Reading: John 3:14-21

Trying to live a successful life without God is like being a light bulb and trying to light up without being plugged in. Impossible.

—Anon.

Greg McKeown is the author of *Effortless: Make It Easier to Do What Matters Most* — a *New York Times* bestseller.

In a blog post called “The Most Important Hour Of Your Life,” he tells the story of the German psychologist Jan Souman, who took some research-study participants to the Sahara Desert and told them to walk in a straight line.

Easier said than done. Have you ever tried it over a long distance? McKeown reports that “[Some] of them walked on a cloudy day, with the sun hidden behind the clouds [and with no reference points in view]. ... [They] all walked in circles, with [several] of them repeatedly crossing their own path without noticing it.”

But some had little or no difficulty. The reason? They walked while the sun was shining, and kept a faraway reference in view. “These ... followed an almost perfectly straight course.”

He concludes, “In other words, if we can identify what is most essential and keep our eyes fixed on that it can help us from getting too far adrift.”

It rings true, doesn’t it? Walking toward the light helps us to walk the straight and narrow path that leads to eternal life. The apostle Paul told the believers at Philippi, “This one thing I do ... I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:13-14).

When we try to live right, act right, do right only according to our own wisdom, we might end up walking in circles, as though we were walking at night without the benefit of the moon or the North Star.

We need the guiding light of Scripture and the Living Word, Jesus Christ himself, to make our paths straight. The writer of Hebrews got it right, “Let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus”! (Hebrews 12:1-2a).

—Timothy Merrill

Prayer: Lord Jesus, I know from past experience that when my eyes stray from you to the cares of this world, I soon lose my way. Help me to have single-minded vision. In your name. Amen.

HOME TOUCH® Activity Page

Week of March 10, 2024

Daily Bible Readings

Sunday: Leviticus 20-23

Monday: Leviticus 24-27

Tuesday: Mark 1-3

Wednesday: Mark 4-6

Thursday: Mark 7-10

Friday: Mark 11-13

Saturday: Psalms 25-28

VOW TO FIND A VOWEL!

Directions: We'll not only give you a vowel, but we'll give you a lot of them. The words in this brain-cruncher have vowels in unusual arrangements. See if you can guess the words from the clues provided. Find the secret message by transferring the circled letters to the appropriate spaces. Remember that the circled letter may be a vowel.

1. Brave: ○ _ _ _ _ _ E O U _
2. A dark profile: _ _ _ _ ○ O U E _ _ _
3. Circular: ○ O U _ _
4. Running away: _ _ _ E E ○ _ _
5. Savage, fierce: _ _ _ _ I O U ○
6. Strange, odd: _ _ U A I _ ○
7. A person from the 50th state: _ _ _ _ A ○ I A _
8. Compress, push together: ○ _ _ U E E _ _
9. A large tree in California: ○ _ _ _ U _ _ I A
10. Paddling in a small, narrow boat: _ _ ○ _ _ O E I _ _
11. Upright, moral and righteous: ○ _ _ _ _ U O U _
12. Lining up in a row: _ _ U E U ○ _ _
13. Gorgeous: _ _ E A U _ _ E ○ U _
14. Precipitation: ○ A I _

Secret Message:
Write here in the
space provided.

March 2024

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

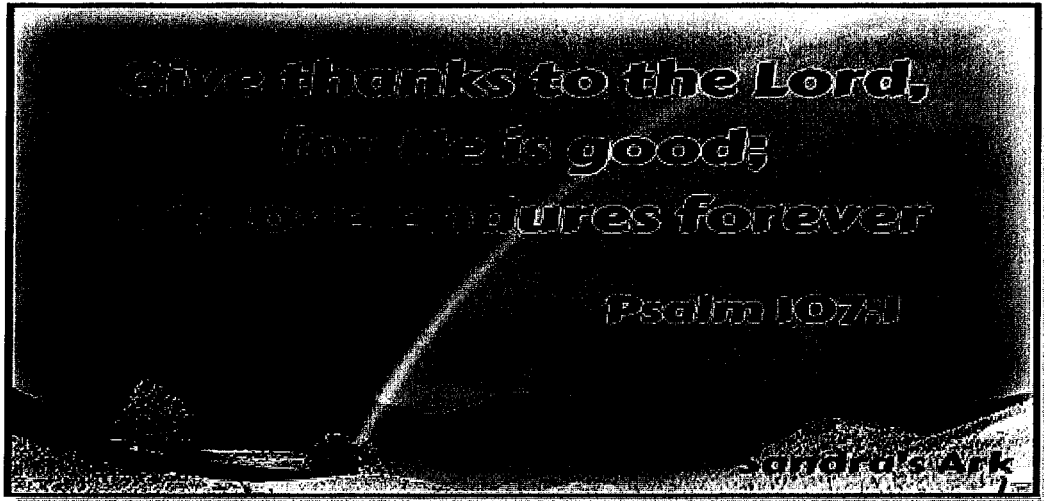
RIDDLE

A family lives in a large tower apartment building, 10 floors high. Every day, their son takes the elevator from the family's apartment on the 10th floor to the ground floor and goes to school. When he returns in the afternoon, he uses the elevator to get to the fifth floor, and then uses the stairs for the remaining five floors. Why?

ANSWERS: 1. courageous; 2. silhouette; 3. round; 4. fleeing; 5. vicious; 6. quaint; 7. Hawaiian; 8. squeeze; 9. sequoia; 10. canoeing; 11. virtuous; 12. queuing; 13. beauteous; 14. rain. **Secret Message:** CHRIST IS SAVIOR. **Riddle:** Because the little kid cannot reach buttons higher than 5.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14

PSALMS 107:1-3, 17-22



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

COUNTRIES
FOREIGN
LOVE
SINS

ENEMIES
GOODNESS
RESCUED
THANKS

ETERNAL
HEALED
SAVED
TROUBLE

EVIL
LORD
SAVED