

Grace Devotion

Week of March 17, 2024

Pastor Fred Young

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A word from the wise old man... ***Jacob the Baker***

“Jacob!” a voice demanded through the din of the bakery. “When will the Messiah come?”

Jacob turned from the dough bench and found the man behind the question.

“You know,” said Jacob, “there is an old story that, if we were to treat every person we met as if they were the Messiah, then it wouldn’t make any difference if they weren’t.” And, while Jacob spoke, he began to wander in his own thoughts:

“If God makes us by filling us with His holy breath, then God has whispered into each of us. So, each time we exhale, we are releasing God’s breath, the message of God’s being. That means we are all messengers from the Source, and maybe, if we treated every person we met as if they were a messenger, we would get the message!”

These thoughts calmed Jacob, but the man who asked the question had grown impatient.

“Jacob, do you sincerely think we are capable of treating everyone as if they were the Messiah?”

“I don’t know,” said Jacob. The questioner seemed to enjoy the idea of this.

“You don’t know?”

“My friend,” said Jacob, meaning it with his voice, “The furthest a wise person can travel is to the border of their ignorance. The furthest a wise one can see is to the beginning of their blindness.”

The man threw up his arms, clearly disgusted with Jacob's answers. "I was told you were a holy man, a prophet, a teacher, but, instead, you tell me that you don't know, that you are ignorant, and that you are blind."

Jacob patiently nodded through the negative description.

"Well," the scoffer continued, "What should I see in you?"

"A man," said Jacob, speaking slowly, "And, in reflection, you might find I look a great deal like you."

Noah BenShea

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We all possess the power to express our uniqueness, our compassion, and our ability to get life wrong in many ways. But as a child of God, we are also given the glorious gift of unconditional grace. Our lives are often measured by how our faith blossoms and bears fruit, keeping in mind that even the prickly pear has a sweet and juicy center.

Likewise, Jesus' message within John's Gospel claims:

"Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lost it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me." John 12:24-26

Christ's words remind us that such action requires letting go of our security. Such justice involves us going beyond our own self-interest for us to promote the well-being of others. But for this to happen we must ask, where do we need to die? What do we need to lose to be faithful? What do we in life possess, that continues to tighten its grip, cutting us off from recognizing we are never alone, but are loved unconditionally by the Messiah who can be seen all around us?

PRAYER: God of second chances and new beginnings, open our eyes to see you around us and open our hearts so that we can understand what your presence truly means to us. Amen.

Blessings!
Pastor Fred

Announcements

- ~Reminder: You may pick up a packet of envelopes in the Gathering Place for either monthly or weekly contributions.
- ~Feel free to put any unwanted bulletins in the recycling paper containers at both entrances. The container for plastic bottles will be in The Gathering Place.
- ~Covered Dish next Sunday immediately following worship.

Church Financials

General pledge Feb.2024: \$7,058
General pledge Feb.2023: \$6,496
YTD income: \$22,676
YTD expenses: \$34,389
YTD deficit: \$11,713

Grace Outreach Activities

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.

Easter Services Update

- Maundy Thursday Service at Trinity UCC Gettysburg led by Pastor Fred at 7 pm
- Good Friday Service at Grace UCC led by Pastor Fred at 7 pm
- JOINT Sunrise Service on Easter at 6:30 am (location TBD)
- Worship at Trinity UCC Gettysburg led by Pastor Fred at approx. 8 am
- Worship with communion at Grace UCC led by Pastor Fred at 10 am.

Torchbearers for Christ



Grace United Church of Christ
100 Fourth Street
Hanover, Pennsylvania 17331
717-632-1146

~ Check Facebook and the Prayer Line 717-634-8865 in case of inclement weather.

March 17, 2024 ~ Fifth Sunday of Lent

Welcome/Announcements
Westminster Chimes

Prelude

** Song: "In Christ Alone" ~ Keith & Kristyn Getty with
Alison Krauss*

** Call to Worship

Lector: Here we are to worship the Most High God,

All: Our awesome creator who chose to come to Earth, to be with us.

Lector: We bring our sins to be forgiven, our joys and blessings to show our gratitude,

All: and our cares and concerns to give to Jesus.

Lector: It is Lent. It is St. Patrick's Day. It is the Lord's Day.

All: Let us all reflect on who we are, who Christ is in our lives, and in the lessons of forgiveness and evangelism modeled by St. Patrick. Let us worship the Triune God together.

** Opening Prayer:

Dear Lord, Creator God, We come to you this fifth Sunday in Lent, knowing that Easter Sunday is approaching, but first must come the cross. Christ could have said, "Father, save me from this hour," but instead he said, "Yes, Father, glorify your name!" Lord, give us the faith and courage to say "Yes," to pick up our cross and follow Christ, and to be bearers of light as we are your children of light. 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 Jesus, the Son of God, who came to be with us. He was tempted in the wilderness but was without sin. He endured the worst cruelty of humankind**

but refused to hate. He was crucified, but death could not contain him. By his Spirit he is with us now, our Savior and our friend. We believe that God is present in the darkness before dawn. We believe in a God in our midst who shares our humanity. We affirm a faith that takes us beyond the safe places into action, into vulnerability. and into the streets. We commit ourselves to work for change, to take risks, to live powerfully; to choose life and be used by the Spirit for God's kingdom of hope, peace, and love. We believe that we are children of the Light, called to be torchbearers into the darkness. Amen

** Hymn: "Be Thou My Vision" #382

Thank you for sharing your tithes and offerings

** "Doxology" #625

** Prayer of Dedication

Poem: "Children of the Light"

Scriptures: Psalm 119:9-16; John 12:20-33 (NRSV)

Time for the Young at Heart

Hymn: (Seated) "Just a Closer Walk with Thee" #380

Message: "Torchbearers" with video

** Song: "Living Hope" ~ Phil Wickham*

** *Final Blessing*

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

Postlude: "G"

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

*** *Adapted and augmented from Affirmations by Stephen M. Fearing and Rev. Dr. Anne Morris*

Children of the Light

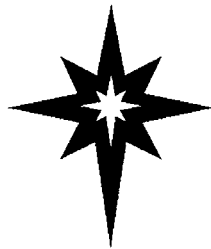
"Believe in the light while you have the light, so that you
may become children of light."

John 12:36

There's so much darkness in the world:
Despair and war and grief.
Sin's heinous banner flies unfurled
And wakes our unbelief.
We long for days of bright sunshine
And skies forever blue,
But stumble hard like we are blind,
Losing the way that's true.

Out of the darkness and despair
God sent God's precious Son
To light our path if we but dare
To walk where Christ has gone.
The light that Jesus brings to us
Can death and fear dispel,
If we believe and learn to trust;
Let Christ within us dwell.

We are the children of our Lord;
We have Christ's light to carry.
God calls to us through the Word,
Oh, let us never tarry.
Believe in Christ, surrender all,
And turn to what is right.
Let's answer "Yes" to Jesus' call
Oh, children of the Light! Patti Miller



How God leads you through your fears

"Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Don't be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand. – Isaiah 41:10

A story is told of a general in the Persian army who captured spies and sentenced them to death. This general had the strange custom of giving condemned criminals a choice between going before a firing squad or walking through a big black door.

Almost without fail, prisoners would choose the firing squad. When one of his commanders asked the general why so few picked the door, he said, "People always prefer the known and fear the unknown. But what they don't know is that on the other side of that big black door is freedom."

Quite often, the best opportunities we have in life lie beyond big doors of the great unknown. Yet instead of walking through those doors, most people are content to remain in their current "safe" circumstances, completely missing out on the opportunities that await them on the other side.

Don't be afraid of the big, foreboding doors of life. **Be willing to face your fears and jump into new opportunities that draw you out of your comfort zone.** God is in control. Trust Him to help you overcome your fears and He'll bring you into a new reliance on Him as your provider!

Prayer Challenge

Ask God to bring you into situations where He can help you overcome your fears and develop a deeper trust in Him.

Questions for thought

Amidst all the chaos going on in the world today, what is your biggest fear right now?

How might God be calling you to overcome that fear and develop a deeper trust in Him?



A New Day, A New Covenant

JEREMIAH 31:31-34

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

BEHOLD
COMING
EGYPT
ISRAEL
LEAST

BROKE
COVENANT
GREATEST
JUDAH
NEIGHBOR

BROTHER
DAYS
HOUSE
LAW
WITHIN

Psalm 51:1-12

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

Transgressions

Steadfast

Justified

Love

Blameless

Abundant

Judgement

Sin

Desirest

Iniquity

Cleanse

Wisdom

Mercy

Mercy

Truth

Teach

