

# Lent Devotional



2011

Joel 2:12-18  
Sharon Evans

3/9/11

What an appropriate passage to celebrate Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent. The Prophet Joel is telling us that the Lord wants us to come to him with our whole heart, fasting, weeping and mourning. This is a time for us to search through our hearts, put them through the wringer so to speak. By fasting or giving up something during Lent, we are asked to spend the time we would have otherwise spent indulging ourselves, in thought and prayer and praise of our wonderful Lord. Through this, we will see that the Lord is gracious and merciful. Thank goodness, He takes pity on his people! We know we are unworthy, yet He does not reproach us for our iniquities but is stirred with love and concern. This is a wonderful message to begin a period where we are to spend time reflecting inward. And the end result is a closer relationship with God and the celebration of a risen Lord.

Dear Lord:

Be with us through this long period of Lent and self sacrifice and guide us to a closer relationship with you and your Son, Jesus Christ.

This passage is from Moses, speaking God's word to the people of Israel, after leading the Hebrews out of Egypt. This scripture is God's word to them in Moab. This is part of the covenant God requires to be His people.

This passage is the continuation of Deuteronomy 29:1, and end the Book of Deuteronomy, meaning 'the Law' of God ( in this case, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Law, after the Law set forth in Horeb, translated to the people again, by Moses). So Deuteronomy is two Laws into 1: parshioth and sedarim.

This passage is a warning and promise: stay to the Truth and Provision of God and no other. He alone will be the Chastener and Provider of good things for His people. Any deviation from the One True God is an abomination ( a very bad thing ).

This reminder to His people is similar to a Confession in our Church , and in the greater Christian community. Like the Westminster Confession, this sermon/edict/Law is a statement of : who we are, Whose we are, and in Whom we rely. Like a : "benchmark"; wedding ring and Old Testament altar, this is to keep us focused.

Let us Pray: Father God, thank you for keeping us and reminding us of how Great You Are! Without you we are at the mercy of the devil and his tricks. We are adrift without a rudder in a stormy sea without You. In your Grace, find us willing, able and obedient to You, for in our humble service to you, You will be exalted and we will be uplifted. In Christ we Pray, Amen

Isaiah 58:1-9A  
Chris Taylor

3/11/11

The Bible is the inspired word of God. It is much more than stories. It speaks to us in ways we do not understand. Sometimes, we read and it reinforces what we are hearing elsewhere. When you hear the same message from multiple sources, there is a very good chance that God is trying to get your attention. This passage is a good example. What have I been hearing lately? Love your neighbor as yourself. End extreme poverty. And in this passage, "share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house". The passage goes on but the message I am getting is clear. We are surrounded by the poor, the hungry, and the hurting. What are we doing to help those in our community? The church offers opportunities such as the food pantry. Are we doing enough? Let's try and do more.

Lord, I know that you love all people and have compassion on those in need. Instill in us this overwhelming love and compassion for those in need around us. Help us to do your will in all things. In Jesus name, amen.

"Serving and Being Served"

I'll have to admit that when I read this passage of scripture in Isaiah, it was one I don't recall having read before. It was not what I would call one of my "favorite memory verses" of scripture. Having read, meditated and prayed over it, what stuck out to me was its "if and then" structure. As Christians, "if" we do this, "then" God will do "that". Obedience is what comes immediately to mind. My parents always used the "if and then" concepts as a way of teaching me obedience and I'll have to say it was effective more often than not. During this period in history, salvation by grace through Jesus Christ was not available to those who loved God. Therefore, obedience by keeping the Mosaic Law was the gold standard for effectively living a life worthy of God's acceptance. What Isaiah is saying here to the Israelites is truly a paradox of sorts. He is saying if you don't do what pleases you and what your sinful nature expects, you will find peace and prosperity. By helping the needy, you yourself will be blessed beyond measure. In his book "Signs of Life" by David Jeremiah, the author speaks about the irony of how giving of ourselves to others actually changes how we view ourselves. I especially love the phrase "in God's kingdom, we get what we need by giving away what we think we need to hold on to". This statement is in direct contradiction of the world's view. This giving away can be many things....time, fellowship, aid to the needy, money, a listening ear and the list goes on and on. So the next time you are feeling down and depressed, remember what God has said through Isaiah and again through His son Jesus, that it is more blessed to give than receive and you will receive blessings beyond measure.

Almighty God, help us daily to "deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow You".  
In the precious name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

This passage tells of Satan's temptations of Jesus and how Jesus handled them. Once Jesus refused the final temptation, He ordered Satan to be gone. We have the same option open to us.

We live in a world filled with temptation, be it Alcohol, gambling, sex, the list could go on and on. If we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and savior, all we have to do is ask him to remove these obsessions and believe He will. He will remove them if we ask daily and try to live as he would like us to. Not one of us is without sin or temptation. We need to be strong in our faith and resist these temptations.

I personally live with a temptation and suffered with it for several years. I was not a very good person when I gave into Satan's temptations.

Thanks be to God He removed that burden and released the yoke that was on me.

Remember that all we have to do is ask Him to remove that burden and He will. We also have to remember that everything is in His time, not ours and it is His will, not ours. Self will run riot.

I ask God for a daily reprieve from my addictive temptation and thank him every night for another day free. I am very fortunate that he removed that obsession from me. He can remove any temptation you may have. Just ask.

Heavenly Father, You know our temptations. Please remove them from us. Let us live our lives as you would want. Lead us from temptation and deliver us from evil. God, You and You only have the power to grant us freedom. In Jesus name. Amen

## "SEEING LIKE JESUS"

This Scripture seems to be so clear about what constitutes admission into the Kingdom of Heaven: feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, provide hospitality to the stranger, clothe the naked, tend the sick and visit the prisoners and you're in. Neglect to do these things and you are sent to hell. So that means our entry to eternal life is based on our works, right? Absolutely not!

Anytime we think there is anything we can do to earn our way into heaven we are on the wrong path. The overall message of God's Word is this: we are saved by God's grace shown to us in Jesus' atoning death on the cross. We can add nothing to the work He accomplished there, paying the price for our sins and giving us salvation as a free gift.

So, what do we do about this Scripture? Let me suggest that although we are saved by grace and not by works, it is our understanding of Christ's work that inspires our actions. If we take for granted what Christ has done for us, we can turn our backs on the suffering in this world. But when we learn about and meditate on and experience the saving love of Jesus, we develop a heart like His: When Moses asked to see God's glory, God came down in a cloud and proclaimed His name: "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger and abounding in love and faithfulness." (Exodus 34:6). God's name is compassion and love. When you know the compassion and love of God for yourself, how can you not see others with that same compassion?

Open yourself up to the Holy Spirit teaching you about the love of Christ. When you experience that love each day, you will see others as Jesus sees them and love them as He does, in His Spirit's power. And you are blessed by the Father.

Holy Spirit, give us the power to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge. Let us be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Amen

I picked this scripture knowing it was somewhere in the Sermon on the Mount. I was a little taken aback when I found out what I had chosen. I don't really think I am qualified to comment on the Lord's Prayer. But fortunately there is more to the passage.

Jesus instructs us to seek a private, quiet and intimate place to be in conversation with our Father. Since I live alone this should be easier for me as I only have to shut out the distractions and focus on the opportunity. Easier said than done! I also remember how it was when I was in the midst of family and found it much more difficult. But Scripture tells us repeatedly how Jesus, himself, sought to retreat from the crowds who sought His presence and healing. He knew how necessary it was for his ministry to talk to his Father to renew, recharge and reinforce his spiritual power and strength if he was to continue on a daily basis. Over and over he retreats to a quiet private place and wants the same blessing for us.

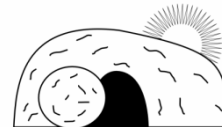
He knows how desperately we all need this and so He encourages all of us to follow his example and then he goes on to give a template for us in the prayer he gives us. We are enjoined to be direct and succinct with no necessity for great eloquence or long dissertations in our private talk with God. God knows what is on our hearts before we speak it or even think it.

Our Father, thank you for the privilege and joy of coming before you in all our circumstances knowing you will hear our every thought and prayer. Amen.

**"I'll Take Your Word For It"**  
(The Sign of Jonah)



At the judgement: The Queen of Sheba "I believed the wisdom of Solomon." The Ninevites "We believed the word of Jonah. After meeting the Son of Man, how could you not believe? He is far greater than any of Israel's kings or prophets. "



For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. - John 3:16

Jonah was inside the belly of the whale for three days and three nights before he was restored. This was a sign given in advance that represented the resurrection of Jesus after his three days and three nights in the tomb. The sign of Jonah would not be seen until after the crucifixion and resurrection. This was a final opportunity to believe in Jesus Christ for the adulterous generation who rejected him.

Our Heavenly Father, We know of your wisdom, power, and love. We have seen and we have heard. Help us to GO and share the Word with those who are unaware, hopeless, or in doubt. Will they believe and be saved or will they reject you and be condemned? Open their minds to seek you, their eyes to see you, and their hearts to receive you. Give them faith. Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. I will take your word for it! And I will take Your Word with me wherever I go, always for your glory. In His name I pray. Amen.

Luke 11:29-32  
Heather Taylor

3/16/11

Don't wait for the storm to hit. Stay close to Him. Allow Him to lead you. Obey His commands. Change any of your ways that are not pleasing to Him. Then, when you feel the cold winds start to blow, hear the rustling leaves, and see the dark clouds rolling in, know that you are prepared, because He is with you.

"Waiting for Lightning" - by Steven Curtis Chapman

Standing on the edge of the truth,  
Looking out at the view  
Of all you used to believe,  
From where you are you can see you're  
far away from home.  
Echoes of the life you once knew  
Call out to you from across the divide,  
And you know it's time to step back over  
the line,  
But you're . . . Waiting for lightning,  
A sign that it's time for a change;  
And you're listening for thunder,  
While He quietly whispers your name.

Night falls and the curtain goes down;  
No one's around,  
It's just you and the truth.  
As you lie in wait  
For a feeling to take you by storm,

Somewhere in the depths of your heart,  
Where it's empty and dark, there's a  
flicker of light,  
And the Spirit calls,  
But do you notice at all;  
Are you . . . Waiting for lightning,  
A sign that it's time for a change;  
And you're listening for thunder,  
While He quietly whispers your name.

But the sign and the word  
Have already been given,  
And now it's by faith  
We must look and we must listen,  
Instead of . . . Waiting for lightning,  
A sign that it's time for a change;  
And you're listening for thunder,  
While He quietly whispers your name.

So many people think that by praying for something it will automatically be given them. So they send off their prayer and then wait for the answer. In this verse, Jesus tells us to be persistent in pursuing God and not give up after a few halfhearted efforts, concluding that God cannot be found. We should not give up on our efforts to seek Him. In this verse Christ is showing us the heart of God the Father... not selfish or stingy, and we don't have to beg or grovel as we come with our requests. He is a loving Father who understands, cares, and comforts. He teaches us to "Do Unto Others As You Would Have Them Do Unto You".

I have heard of people, who have gone through illness or tough times, say they could feel people praying for them. I always wondered what it was like to feel that. And I found out...lying in my hospital bed after my recent back surgery on a Thursday night, I could feel the Women's Bible Study group praying for me...it was so strong, that I reached for my cell phone (not an easy task having to keep my head down and with a splitting migraine to boot) and called one of the members' cell phone to assure them that the surgery went well and I was okay. The urge was so great I HAD to talk to one of them and I only knew one number to call.

The power of prayer is more powerful than any of us imagine...and if we knock, the door will be opened; if we seek, we will find. I am healing well now and I know people are still praying for me and I am so grateful for that. I went to choir practice two weeks after my surgery...something I thought would not happen so fast and it felt so good to be back!!

Heavenly Father, thank you for all the prayers for me before, during, and after my surgery!! I am so blessed with my church family, Common Time family, other immediate family and close friends in my life! Without their prayers, I would not have gone through all of this so easily. Help me to "do unto others as they have done unto me". In Jesus name...Amen!

## "Angry Hearts"

We've all had days like this. From the first thing in the morning, everything seems to go wrong. The milk spills, we discover that the shirt we planned to wear is still in the wash. Next thing we know we're yelling at the dog (or the kids) and casting mean(ingful) looks at our spouse. Just like that, the day is poisoned by anger. We're short-tempered with other drivers, our co-workers, our clients. Then we take a long walk, or get a good night's sleep, and the angry feeling is gone.

Or maybe not. There are people who have hurt or disappointed us, who we just cannot think about without getting angry. Or situations that are just so irritating...rude neighbors, unfair bosses, cold-hearted bureaucracies. We just can't let go of that anger.

So what's the big deal? That's life, isn't it? The Ten Commandments do not say "Thou shalt not be angry." As long as we don't act on our anger (like commit murder), we're okay with God, right?

Not really.

Reading *The Divine Conspiracy* by Dallas Willard has helped me to understand this passage from the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus tells us that it's not just our actions, but our hearts, which must be righteous. Otherwise we're just like the Pharisees, clean on the outside, but spoiled inside. Angry thoughts may start spontaneously, but if we cultivate them, the malice in our hearts toward the object of our anger is the same malice that leads to contempt (calling our brother "Raca", or "twit"), insult (saying "You fool!"), and, in the extreme, murder. It is hurtful to others, and harmful to our health. Anger may be fashionable these days, but it does not belong in God's kingdom. As Willard says, "...there is nothing that can be done with anger that cannot be done better without it ... to retain anger and to cultivate it is ... 'to give the devil a chance.'"

Prayer: Lord, help me to put aside anger, bitterness, and self-righteousness. Help me to be reconciled with my brothers and sisters, my adversaries, or anyone else I have offended, or who has offended me. Amen.

**"Love for Enemies"**

NEFRETNUHBUBRYS  
OUTNEEEEONQREOA  
BNEUVWAERYSOHNI  
WMEACVAIREUTTRD  
YEEIEEGRVGOHAID  
PHHNGHSODAEFSR  
DRLTTHLRRXTRPEA  
OYAETFBOECHSNPE  
OLOYNATOVPGHEAH  
GUCIECMNRLIVEGD  
SHATESDNESRQXAT  
URSLTHEREFORENJ  
TULQHTCEFREPJSJ  
NOAREERHTYTROFZ  
CAUSESIOEMFIVEI

BROTHERS  
CAUSES  
COLLECTOR  
ENEMY  
EVIL  
FATHER  
FIVE  
FORTYTHREE  
GOOD  
GREET  
HATE

HEARD  
HEAVEN  
HEAVENLY  
LOVE  
MATTHEW  
NEIGHBOR  
PAGANS  
PERFECT  
PERSECUTE  
PRAY  
RAIN

REWARD  
RIGHTEOUS  
RISE  
SAID  
SENDS  
SUN  
TAX  
THEREFORE  
UNRIGHTEOUS  
YOU

Holy Father, you call us to be your servants. Please open our eyes and hearts to those around us in need and teach us to yield to Your Spirit, so that through You we may accomplish Your will. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

**"Marvel Not!"**

"How can man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus poses this very question to Jesus. In the world of Nicodemus, a Jewish leader in the Sanhedrin, Gentiles could become followers of Christ by becoming baptized with water. To Nicodemus, to a Jew, his conversion was not necessary. He was born into, and inherited, his Jewish faith just as others Jews did. Jesus, however, had just told Nicodemus that he must be "born again" to enter the kingdom of heaven. Nicodemus was perplexed.

**Message for our times...**

To realize our path to the Kingdom of God is through a baptism by the Spirit, a rebirth of water and Spirit. It is to acknowledge a need. It is to acknowledge that we fall short on our own. How perplexing a statement to a world around us dependent upon self-fulfillment, achievement, and position. To non-Christians success only comes from learning by our mistakes, overcoming failure, and conquering life. Success is earned. While that process is important to many, the pinnacle of our achievement, as a Christian, is our spiritual renewal, regeneration, a new life dependent fully and only upon the Spirit. Our new life is not earned, it is granted.

**Application for our times...**

In this Lenten season let us reflect upon God's grace and His ability to overlook our limited vision and goals for our own life. Let us give thanks, that through a seemingly perplexing process of being reborn, we are cleansed, set apart, and prepared for a life of abundant living. This new life can take place regardless of our "old" lives, our lives of habits, failures, transgressions, and sin. This new life is one of hope, success, and life!

Lord,

In this season of our lives please give us strength to press ahead, to set aside, as we have ability, those things which distract us from you. Let us give thanks for the wondrous ways which you work, often in spite of our "old" lives. As see and experience our new lives revealed before us let us share the joy with others.

Amen.

## "Turn to God"

*"Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. I prayed to the LORD my God and made confession, saying, "O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, we have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules. We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. To you, O Lord, belongs righteousness, but to us open shame, as at this day, to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to all Israel, those who are near and those who are far away, in all the lands to which you have driven them, because of the treachery that they have committed against you. To us, O Lord, belongs open shame, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against you. To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against him and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God by walking in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets."*

### **Message for our times...**

To confess is to share, to acknowledge, our transgressions. To confess, to admit our wrongdoing, is to accept fault. The world may tell us that if we admit fault, we to show our weakness. If we are weak we are unable survive. In a way they may be correct.

As Christians we are weak if we examine the effect of unconfessed sin upon our lives. The unabated sin can build a wall of pride, a wall of fear, a wall of isolation. This wall can become a barrier to you and your intended work in our lives. You, and I, remain weak. We are unable to function according to His plan.

We should accept and practice confession as a regular way to break down those walls, to break down the barrier of sin. Confession does acknowledge our weakness but reflects upon God's greatness. Confession does point out our failing but it points to God's successes. Confession does place us in a position of dependence but reveals God's grace and assistance. Confession is necessary! Confession leads to forgiveness! Confession leads to mercy! Confession leads to God!

O God,

Mold our hearts into vessels of weakness. Rather than live a life of preservation and self-fulfillment help us look to you in all our needs. Help us remember that we can come to you in all our failures, weaknesses, and struggles. Be merciful on us for the times we live our lives in sin and transgression. Give us strength to live godly lives in world of

temptation, brokenness, and sin. We give thanks for our new life in Christ, our new life on the Spirit. Guide us along the proper path of righteousness. Amen.

Isaiah 1:10,16-20

3/22/11

Adam Hungerford

### **"Take Heed!"**

*"Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom! Give ear to the teaching of our God, you people of Gomorrah!"* The Prophet Isaiah delivers these words to a people, a people of God, unwilling to change, unwilling to cease their transgressions, unwilling to stop their sin. Oh they had attempted to make things right! They attempted to give 'proper' gifts, sacrifices to appease God. They rebelled yet, at the same time, sought approval.

#### **Message for our times...**

God does not sit and watch, He does not simply allow His people to slip away into sin and wickedness. He does not let the sin fester until it wipes out His entire people. He responds! God provides a way out. Just as God commanded through Isaiah then, he speaks to us now. *"Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause (vs. 16-18)".*

The alternative, as Isaiah writes, is to "perish by the Sword".

#### **Application for our times...**

What is our response as we acknowledge the sin in our lives? Do we acknowledge any sin? Have we found some sin to be comfortable only because we have mastered the major sins? Have we compensated for a little sin because we offer other gifts and service to God? Let us not be like the nation of Judah by our resolve and stubbornness to live our own lives, apart from the examination of God.

During this Lenten season let us set any issues of unresolved sin and will before God. Let us place them in the revealing light of God's truth so we may see them for what they really are. Let us look to God, the power of the cross, and the strength of the Spirit for cleansing and goodness.

Lord,

We thank you for your humiliating, painful, and public death. In light of the sin we tuck away, hide from others, and hide from you we give thanks that you still provide a way for us to set it aside. We confess that we sometimes do not wish to deal with the sin because it is hard, it is recurring, it is overwhelming. We give thanks that you desire something better, and more holy. We give thanks that you still call us to set our sin before you, to set it aside, and to seek higher things. Give us strength to do so.

Amen.



In 627 B.C. Jeremiah was chosen as a Prophet at the young age of about 13 years old. He was around as the Law was rediscovered and read. He was a Prophet for about 40 years under the reign of king Josiah & 4 later kings. He was like Moses, being reluctant for his mission: " I do not know how to speak, for I am Only a youth" (Jer.1:5)

Apparently God asks of us tasks we do not believe we can perform, or gives us a path we do not think we can handle. But God is not asking us to go alone. He is with us and will not forsake us striving to do his will. Repentance is a re-aligner. Prayer is Communion with God, and our very expenditure of energy in His will is what He requires of us.

Jeremiah's mission was not all rosy. He was marked for death, and had to speak out against authority, for God had chosen his words. Shortly after Jeremiah died, Babylon sacked Jerusalem. Apparently his words were not heeded, but if they had been, that tragedy may not have befallen the Israelites.

Let us pray: Father, thank you for Jeremiah and his admonitions to your people. We Praise you for your Holy Word, and ask you to open our ears & eyes to hear what you have to say, and do what you have us do. In Christ Jesus, Amen.

ASV

<sup>5</sup> Thus saith Jehovah: Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from Jehovah.

<sup>6</sup> For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh, but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, a salt land and not inhabited.

<sup>7</sup> Blessed is the man that trusteth in Jehovah, and whose trust Jehovah is.

<sup>8</sup> For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, that spreadeth out its roots by the river, and shall not fear when heat cometh, but its leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.

<sup>9</sup> The heart is deceitful above all things, and it is exceedingly corrupt: who can know it?

<sup>10</sup> I, Jehovah, search the mind, I try the heart, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings.

CEV

<sup>5</sup>I, the LORD, have put a curse on those who turn from me and trust in human strength.

<sup>6</sup>They will dry up like a bush in salty desert soil, where nothing can grow.

<sup>7</sup>But I will bless those who trust me.

<sup>8</sup>They will be like trees growing beside a stream-- trees with roots that reach down to the water, and with leaves that are always green.

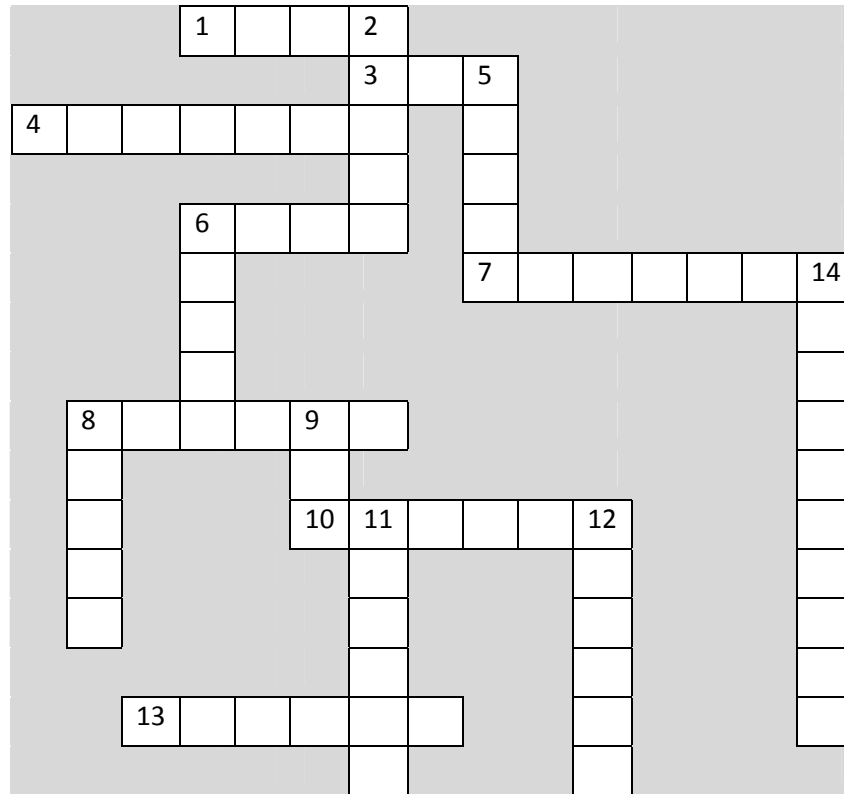
They bear fruit every year and are never worried by a lack of rain.

<sup>9</sup>You people of Judah are so deceitful that you even fool yourselves, and you can't change.

<sup>10</sup>But I know your deeds and your thoughts, and I will make sure

you get what you deserve.  
 Gen 37:3-4, 12-13, 17-28  
 Mary Ruth Ostrander

3/25/11



Across

1. Greatest commandment from N.T.  
(verb)
3. Ruler of all
4. What Joseph was sold into
6. Many colored clothing (Outerware)
7. One who will come in N.T.
8. Main Character
10. Tribulations
13. Main Character's father

Down

2. Country Character taken to
5. What character shared with brothers/ have this when sleep - not nightmare
6. What we all bear, crucifixion device
8. Trinity member who became human
9. Hole in ground, trap
11. Brother saved other from death
12. Jesus is the \_\_\_\_\_ of us all
14. Dwells within us.

This passage is very like Jesus to God. Joseph was Israel's favored son because he was born when Israel was old. Yet Joseph was persecuted and sold into slavery by his brothers. This is a reflection of Jesus' persecution so many years later.

Lord, let us not persecute you, nor be persecuted by others. Instead, let us turn to you in our times of trials and love our fellow humans. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

ASV

<sup>14</sup> Feed thy people with thy rod, the flock of thy heritage, which dwell solitarily, in the forest in the midst of Carmel: let them feed in Bashan and Gilead, as in the days of old.

<sup>15</sup> As in the days of thy coming forth out of the land of Egypt will I show unto them marvellous things.

CEV

<sup>14</sup>Lead your people, LORD!

Come and be our shepherd.

Grasslands surround us,  
but we live in a forest.

So lead us to Bashan and Gilead, <sup>[a]</sup> and let us find pasture  
as we did long ago.

<sup>15</sup>I, the LORD, will work miracles  
just as I did  
when I led you  
out of Egypt.

"Samaritans Admit their Thirst and their Hunger"

Self sufficiency is a big part of the American identity. There is nothing wrong with the desire to provide for our household, but it is arrogance if we think we are without need. This god of pride interferes with the kingdom Christ came to establish. Even His disciples were surprised to find Christ speaking with a Samaritan woman; possibly as surprised as she was to hear Christ tell her her life. Christ was frank with her that the Messiah was sent first to the Jews, but brought her the news that a time was coming that all who drank from the water of the Spirit of God would worship Him in Spirit and in Truth and that they would never thirst again. He showed her the obstacle that was keeping her from purity, and also showed her the sufficiency of life beyond her many husbands and with God.

In the next two days those who heard her testimony, also Samaritans, not the chosen, begged Christ to stay with them and teach them. They admitted their need, their thirst and hunger for more than the daily sustenance of this earth and they came to a saving knowledge of God. What obstacles do we each need to lay down to worship in Spirit and in Truth? What can God's Word reveal to the needy around us, of the end to their thirst? The Word tells us each our lives as Christ told the Samaritan woman hers. It reveals us to ourselves and also the route God has provided for eternal life.

Dear Lord,

Let us dwell in Your Word richly, that those who thirst may dip in our well and see their salvation, end their thirst in Your adoption and forgiveness. Let the waiting harvest around us be real to each one of us every day, and thank You for those who helped to bring about the harvest of my own salvation. Keep our hearts tender and show us where You would have us go. In Jesus Name Amen.

## ASV

<sup>5</sup> And he led him up, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.

<sup>6</sup> And the devil said unto him, To thee will I give all this authority, and the glory of them: for it hath been delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it.

<sup>7</sup> If thou therefore wilt worship before me, it shall all be thine.

<sup>8</sup> And Jesus answered and said unto him, It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

<sup>9</sup> And he led him to Jerusalem, and set him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou art the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence:

<sup>10</sup> for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, to guard thee:

<sup>11</sup> and, On their hands they shall bear thee up, Lest haply thou dash thy foot against a stone.

<sup>12</sup> And Jesus answering said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not make trial of the Lord thy God.

<sup>13</sup> And when the devil had completed every temptation, he departed from him for a season.

<sup>14</sup> And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and a fame went out concerning him through all the region round about.

<sup>15</sup> And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all.

<sup>16</sup> And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and he entered, as his custom was, into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up to read.

<sup>17</sup> And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Isaiah. And he opened the book, and found the place where it was written,

<sup>18</sup> The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, Because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor: He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives, And recovering of sight to the blind, To set at liberty them that are bruised,

<sup>19</sup> To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

<sup>20</sup> And he closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down: and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fastened on him.

<sup>21</sup> And he began to say unto them, To-day hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears.

<sup>22</sup> And all bare him witness, and wondered at the words of grace which proceeded out of his mouth: and they said, Is not this Joseph's son?

<sup>23</sup> And he said unto them, Doubtless ye will say unto me this parable, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done at Capernaum, do also here in thine own country.

<sup>24</sup> And he said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is acceptable in his own country.

<sup>25</sup> But of a truth I say unto you, There were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when there came a great famine over all the land;

<sup>26</sup> and unto none of them was Elijah sent, but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.

<sup>27</sup> And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.

<sup>28</sup> And they were all filled with wrath in the synagogue, as they heard these things;

<sup>29</sup> and they rose up, and cast him forth out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might throw him down headlong.

<sup>30</sup> But he passing through the midst of them went his way.

<sup>31</sup> And he came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee. And he was teaching them on the sabbath day:

<sup>32</sup> and they were astonished at his teaching; for his word was with authority.

<sup>33</sup> And in the synagogue there was a man, that had a spirit of an unclean demon; and he cried out with a loud voice,

<sup>34</sup> Ah! what have we to do with thee, Jesus thou Nazarene? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.

<sup>35</sup> And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the demon had thrown him down in the midst, he came out of him, having done him no hurt.

<sup>36</sup> And amazement came upon all, and they spake together, one with another, saying, What is this word? for with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out.

<sup>37</sup> And there went forth a rumor concerning him into every place of the region round about.

<sup>38</sup> And he rose up from the synagogue, and entered into the house of Simon. And Simon's wife's mother was holden with a great fever; and they besought him for her.

<sup>39</sup> And he stood over her, and rebuked the fever; and it left her: and immediately she rose up and ministered unto them.

<sup>40</sup> And when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him; and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them.

<sup>41</sup> And demons also came out from many, crying out, and saying, Thou art the Son of God. And rebuking them, he suffered them not to speak, because they knew that he was the Christ.

<sup>42</sup> And when it was day, he came out and went into a desert place: and the multitudes sought after him, and came unto him, and would have stayed him, that he should not go from them.

Matt 18:21-35

3/29/11

An Interview with the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grade Sunday School class

### "A Math Lesson in Forgiveness"

**Q:** Suppose your brother or sister were deliberately doing something to bug you. They stopped when you asked them, and said they were sorry, and you forgave them. But then they started doing it again. How many times would you keep forgiving them?

**A:** Two ... About three, then I tell my Mom...A lot, even though he never says he's sorry...I never stop forgiving, because that's what Jesus tells us.

**Q:** In Matthew 18: 22 how many times does Jesus tell Peter that he must forgive his brother when he sins against him?

**A:** Seventy-seven times!

**Q:** Does he mean that on the seventy-eighth time, he does not have to forgive?

**A:** Yes...No

**Q:** What does he mean?

**A:** We have to keep forgiving, as many times as it takes. (Seventy-seven is another way of saying endless times)

Lets look at the parable Jesus tells about forgiveness.

**Q:** According to our bible dictionary, how much was a talent worth in dollars?

**A:** \$1000

**Q:** How many talents did the king's servant owe him?

**A:** 10,000

**Q:** So how much was this in dollars?

**A:**  $10,000 \times \$1,000 = \$10,000,000!$  (Add three zeroes)

**Q:** What was the king going to do to the servant when he didn't pay?

**A:** Sell him and his wife and children.

Q: What did the servant do?

A: Begged for his life.

Q: What did the king do?

A: Forgave his debt and let him go.

Q: How much did the second servant owe the first servant?

A: 100 denarii

Q: According to our bible dictionary, how much was a denarii worth?

A: 17¢

Q: So how much was this in dollars?

A:  $.17 \times 100 = \$17.00$  (move the decimal point over two)

Q: What should the first servant have done when the second servant couldn't pay?

A: Forgave him.

Q: What did the first servant do?

A: He grabbed the second servant, choked him, and put him in jail.

Q: How did the king feel when he heard about this?

A: He was furious because the first servant didn't forgive the second servant's \$17.00 debt after being forgiven his ten million dollar debt.

Q: What did the king do to the unmerciful servant?

A: Put him in jail to be tortured until he paid back all he owed.

Q: What does this parable tell us about God?

A: That he always forgives even when our debt is huge.

Q: What does it tell us about what we should do?

A: Always forgive, even though it's hard.

Prayer:

Dear God, help us to learn about forgiveness ...I forgive you from when I had sad times at school...help me to forgive my brother...help us to forgive even things that are very bad.

Amen

*ASV*

<sup>17</sup> Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy, but to fulfil.

<sup>18</sup> For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished.

<sup>19</sup> Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

*CEV*

<sup>17</sup>Don't suppose that I came to do away with the Law and the Prophets. <sup>[a]</sup> I did not come to do away with them, but to give them their full meaning. <sup>18</sup>Heaven and earth may disappear. But I promise you that not even a period or comma will ever disappear from the Law. Everything written in it must happen. <sup>19</sup>If you reject even the least important command in the Law and teach others to do the same, you will be the least important person in the kingdom of heaven. But if you obey and teach others its commands, you will have an important place in the kingdom.

## ASV

<sup>14</sup> And he was casting out a demon that was dumb. And it came to pass, when the demon was gone out, the dumb man spake; and the multitudes marvelled.

<sup>15</sup> But some of them said, By Beelzebub the prince of the demons casteth he out demons.

<sup>16</sup> And others, trying him, sought of him a sign from heaven.

<sup>17</sup> But he, knowing their thoughts, said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falleth.

<sup>18</sup> And if Satan also is divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because ye say that I cast out demons by Beelzebub.

<sup>19</sup> And if I by Beelzebub cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? therefore shall they be your judges.

<sup>20</sup> But if I by the finger of God cast out demons, then is the kingdom of God come upon you.

<sup>21</sup> When the strong man fully armed guardeth his own court, his goods are in peace:

<sup>22</sup> but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him his whole armor wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.

<sup>23</sup> He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth.

## CEV

<sup>14</sup> Jesus forced a demon out of a man who could not talk. And after the demon had gone out, the man started speaking, and the crowds were amazed. <sup>15</sup>But some people said, "He forces out demons by the power of Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons!"

<sup>16</sup>Others wanted to put Jesus to the test. So they asked him to show them a sign from God. <sup>17</sup>Jesus knew what they were thinking, and he said:

A kingdom where people fight each other will end up in ruin. And a family that fights will break up. <sup>18</sup>If Satan fights against himself, how can his kingdom last? Yet you say that I force out demons by the power of Beelzebub. <sup>19</sup>If I use his power to force out demons, whose power do your own followers use to force them out? They are the ones who will judge you. <sup>20</sup>But if I use God's power to force out demons, it proves that God's kingdom has already come to you.

<sup>21</sup>When a strong man arms himself and guards his home, everything he owns is safe. <sup>22</sup>But if a stronger man comes and defeats him, he will carry off the weapons in which the strong man trusted. Then he will divide with others what he has taken. <sup>23</sup>If you are not on my side, you are against me. If you don't gather in the

crop with me, you scatter it.

### "The Greatest Commandment"

What is the purpose of God's law or commandments? The Pharisees prided themselves in the knowledge of the law and their ritual requirements. They made it a life-time practice to study the 616 precepts of the Old Testament along with the numerous rabbinic commentaries. They tested Jesus to see if he correctly understood the law as they did. Jesus startled them with his profound simplicity and mastery of the law of God and its purpose. What does God require of us? Simply that we love as he loves! God is love and everything he does flows from his love for us. God loved us first and our love for him is a response to his exceeding grace and kindness towards us. The love of God comes first and the love of neighbor is firmly grounded in the love of God. The more we know of God's love and truth the more we love what he loves and reject what is hateful and contrary to his will. What makes our love for God and his commands grow in us? Faith in God and hope in his promises strengthens us in the love of God. They are essential for a good relationship with God, for being united with him. The more we know of God the more we love him and the more we love him the greater we believe and hope in his promises. The Lord, through the gift of the Holy Spirit, gives us a new freedom to love as he loves. Do you allow anything to keep you from the love of God and the joy of serving others with a generous heart? Paul the Apostle says: *hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us* (Romans 5:5). Do you know the love which conquers all?

**Prayer:** "We love you, O our God; and we desire to love you more and more. Grant to us that we may love you as much as we desire, and as much as we ought. O dearest friend, who has so loved and saved us, the thought of whom is so sweet and always growing sweeter, come with Christ and dwell in our hearts; that you keep a watch over our lips, our steps, our deeds, and we shall not need to be anxious either for our souls or our bodies. Give us love, sweetest of all gifts, which knows no enemy. Give us in our hearts pure love, born of your love to us, that we may love others as you love us. O most loving Father of Jesus Christ, from whom flows all love, let our hearts, frozen in sin, cold to you and cold to others, be warmed by this divine fire. So help and bless us in your Son."  
(Prayer of Anselm, 12<sup>th</sup> cen.)

ASV

⁹ And he spake also this parable unto certain who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and set all others at nought:

¹⁰ Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.

¹¹ The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.

¹² I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I get.

¹³ But the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote his breast, saying, God, be thou merciful to me a sinner.

¹⁴ I say unto you, This man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

CEV

⁹ Jesus told a story to some people who thought they were better than others and who looked down on everyone else:

¹⁰ Two men went into the temple to pray. <sup>[a]</sup> One was a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. <sup>[b]</sup> ¹¹ The Pharisee stood over by himself and prayed, <sup>[c]</sup> "God, I thank you that I am not greedy, dishonest, and unfaithful in marriage like other people. And I am really glad that I am not like that tax collector over there. ¹² I go without eating <sup>[d]</sup> for two days a week, and I give you one tenth of all I earn." ¹³ The tax collector stood off at a distance and did not think he was good enough even to look up toward heaven. He was so sorry for what he had done that he pounded his chest and prayed, "God, have pity on me! I am such a sinner."

¹⁴ Then Jesus said, "When the two men went home, it was the tax collector and not the Pharisee who was pleasing to God. If you put yourself above others, you will be put down. But if you humble yourself, you will be honored."

"Darkness and light"

Every day for years, the devout walked past a blind man, begging for alms outside the temple. He depended on their kindness for his existence. But then Jesus knelt and mixed his spit with the dirt, placed the poultice on the man's sightless eyes and told him to wash his eyes in the pool of Siloam and the man, blind from birth, following the directions, was given sight. You and I see this as a time to rejoice. The man believed wholeheartedly in Christ's ability to perform this miracle or he would not have gone to the pool. Why did Christ not simply speak the words or touch the man and give him sight in front of the temple? I have always thought it was a way of testing the man's heart, as many times, God has already answered our prayers, but will wait for us to believe before the whole treasure is poured out. By washing in the pool, the man chose to receive what Christ offered.

But the rest of the story is not about the miracle. It is about those who prefer darkness to light. The religious leaders brought the man and his family in for hostile questioning about this miracle. Why? They did not really want to have a God. They wanted to be gods. Jesus had healed the man on the Sabbath and with no special dispensation from the religious leaders. They were fine with a god they could put in a box and meet out according to their own preferences and convenience, as long as they remained the supreme authority over the people. They were not ready to honor a God who did not need their lip service. Did they know that they were opposing the will of God? They knew they were opposing one who could heal a man blind from birth, and knew that prophecy and healing came from God, and they did not fear Him.

Dear Lord,

How many times will we try to put You in a box, preferring our habits and our vague ideas about how one should live? Let us learn to honor You in all Your power, in all Your authority and prefer light to darkness, even when those around us sometimes make it clear that Your light is not welcome in this world. Give us the strength to always choose Your light, no matter what earthly authority comes against us, and help us to remember to pray for Your servants in places where the act of worship can cost them their freedom and even their lives. In Jesus name, Amen.

Isaiah 65:17-21  
Noel Weigel

4/4/11

In this Passage, Isaiah ( a major prophet because of the length of his work, not the importance ) is saying God does not approve of slacking when it comes to obeying Him. But He will bless those in His will. This is a reminder to us; to follow God is not easy, but The Most Important God will know how to Bless us.

Isaiah wrote in the last 40 years of the 8<sup>th</sup> century to offer hope to Judah (lower Israel) as they were under Assyrian aggression. He was so overwhelmed by God's presence, he proclaimed " Here am I! Send me! When asked by God "Who will be my messenger?"

This quote is in a couple of Anthems the Choir sings on Sunday at North Pres.. It never fails to move me, and should all of us to realize the very God of His Creation is allowing us to demonstrate His awesome works, and wants us to participate in magnifying Him.

The downside of this gift is the opposite of being blessed, being "accursed ".( Isaiah 65 vs.20 ).

We would rather be Blessed by our Lord than cursed by Him. But this passage is of Hope, not despair.

Let us offer to God this Prayer: Holy one, You have given us the information and tools to follow You. We Praise you for allowing us to work out Your Salvation on Earth. Please forgive our stumblings, but find us of good hearts for Your Purposes. In Your Holy Name we pray. Amen

Water, necessary for life. The flow of water brings cleansing. When water lies static without motion it becomes stagnant. Dynamic movement cleanses bringing forth more life.

In the Tabernacle the courtyard held a large basin where the priests washed. The Temple built by Solomon held a much larger "sea" which was also used for ritual washing but it held the additional symbol of the primeval ocean shaped by God at Creation. That sea was no longer in its state as a symbol of chaos, but brought into service by God.

Ezekiel's vision moves beyond basins to a life-giving river also seen by John in his vision (see Rev 21:1 and 22:1-2). The laver of the Tabernacle and the Sea of Solomon's Temple stood south of the altar and so does this river flow "down from below the south end of the threshold of the temple, south of the altar."

This river flowing from the temple brings life wherever it goes, transforming all it touches into a garden of paradise. Jesus described Himself as the source of life giving water while He spoke with the Samaritan woman. Later in John 4 spoke to his disciples of the harvest, perhaps a harvest watered from that water flowing from Himself, giving life.

#### Prayer

Lord, help us to see the effects of your life giving water that flows forth from You. Give us eyes to see the harvest and life that comes from that river. May we be willing to labor diligently in the fields where You have led us, bringing in Your harvest. For Your honor and glory, Amen

So, the big theological term is "*omnipresent*." *Omn*- completely or to the utmost; *present* - well, present. *Omnipresent* - completely present or present everywhere. To say that God is omnipresent is to say that there is no place where God is not. We learn that about God from such passages as Psalm 139. "Where can I flee from your presence? . . . If I fly away on the wings of the dawn [*to the farthest east*] or settle down on the other side of the sea [*to the farthest west*], . . . even there your right hand would grab hold of me" (vss. 7, 9, 10).

This is a biblical truth about God. He is present everywhere. He does not abandon us (see Matt. 28:20).

But if that is true, why does it sometimes feel as if God is nowhere to be found? Here in Isaiah 49, the prophet is speaking to people who feel just that way. They cry out, "The Lord has abandoned me!" (v. 14).

But through the prophet, God says, "No, it will never be so." He says, "Even if mothers could forget their children, I could never forget you" (v. 15).

So, what has happened? It is the people (us) who have wandered off, or at least we try to. We put up walls to hide us from God, just as Adam and Eve tried to hid from God (Gen. 3:8). We want to lead our own lives without any involvement (interference?) from God. And so, we pull the covers up over our head and try to pretend he isn't there. We'll be in charge of our own lives.

But soon the howling emptiness of the Godless world begins to creep into the corners of our souls, and we cry out, "The sovereign master has forgotten me" (v. 14). But God says, "No. Open your eyes! Take you head out from under the covers! Look around! I haven't abandoned you. I can't forget you. I have been here with you all along. Now, come back to me. See, I am working redemption in all the howling darkness. See, I am making everything new" (Rev. 21:5).

Lord Jesus, our good Shepherd, don't let us wander away from you. Don't let us think that we are far from you and forgotten. Instead enable us to know that you are always near and busy about the work of making all things new. Amen.

In this passage the people of Israel, after seeing a miraculous deliverance by their God, respond by going their own way. Their leader has been delayed upon the mount (I often wonder about that comment from scripture, was it because someone set up an hourglass someplace and the sand ran out?) So, the people became restless and demanded that Aaron make some gods to go before them, as well as throw a good party. The real issue is not Moses' leadership up to this point, but his present absence.

The disobedience of the people is the perfect opportunity to test the character of Moses. Recalling the prior ministry of the Exodus leader, we realize he was not one who basked in the limelight, nor did he particularly enjoy being the head of this mass of people. He is not someone who would have gone out of his way to be at the head of anything. At many points in the Scripture he calls those whom the Lord placed in his charge "God's people." In an interesting turn of phrase here, God addresses them to Moses as "your people."

Moses here steps into the role of intercessor. Flagrantly disregarding the offer of God to destroy the Hebrews and create a new nation from him, he places himself into the gap. Appealing to the character of God, he states that God had made promises to the patriarchs. Upon the basis of faithfulness and grace God relents (perhaps His purpose all along?) from the disaster he had purposed for Israel.

Our Intercessor has been this successful in His dealings with His Father on our behalf. And He will continue to be successful when we forget the miraculous deliverance that has been granted to us. As Moses claimed the people as his own before an angry God, so has Jesus claimed us as His own before the justice of His Father.

#### Prayer

Almighty God, Thank you for sending us a high priest who has claimed us and will always be willing to shield us by taking the punishment for our sin and restoring us to proper relationship with You. In the name of our deliverer Jesus, amen.

"NO RECORD"

This is one of the "Psalms of Ascent", the fifteen psalms the Hebrew people would sing on their pilgrimages to Jerusalem (Psalm 120-134). A couple of years ago some of the women at North studied the Psalms of Ascent, using Beth Moore's book, Stepping Up. Psalm 130, verse 3 asks a rhetorical question, the answer to which tells us that God does not keep a record of our sins.

This is what Beth Moore writes about this verse: "The metaphor in verse 3 is a 'divine storage of sins.' Imagine what heaven would be like if, when you get there, God raises the door on your storage unit and brings out one memento after another representing each sin. For me, that would not be heaven. It would be a descent into hell.....'God keeps no record of sins.' Read that sentence again until it finally sinks in. ....God is not the one keeping the record. You are. You may think you are honoring God with misery over your past mistakes, but you're not.....Do you want to honor God with your response to His forgiveness? Then be happy about it! Jump up and down with relief and joy!"

Our sins are forgiven and forgotten by God. Psalm 32:1-2 reads, "Count yourself lucky, how happy you must be—you get a fresh start, your slate's wiped clean. Count yourself lucky—God holds nothing against you." (*The Message*). That is great news! That is the gospel..

Jesus, by your blood our sins are forgiven and forgotten. We praise You for this and we thank You for it. Help us to live like we believe this. Amen.

ASV

<sup>18</sup> And Jehovah gave me knowledge of it, and I knew it: then thou showedst me their doings.

<sup>19</sup> But I was like a gentle lamb that is led to the slaughter; and I knew not that they had devised devices against me, saying, Let us destroy the tree with the fruit thereof, and let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name may be no more remembered.

<sup>20</sup> But, O Jehovah of hosts, who judgest righteously, who triest the heart and the mind, I shall see thy vengeance on them; for unto thee have I revealed my cause.

CEV

<sup>18</sup>Some people plotted to kill me.

And like a lamb  
being led to the butcher,  
I knew nothing  
about their plans.

<sup>19</sup>But then the LORD told me  
that they had planned  
to chop me down like a tree--  
fruit and all--  
so that no one would ever  
remember me again.

<sup>20</sup>I prayed, "LORD All-Powerful,  
you always do what is right,  
and you know every thought.  
So I trust you to help me  
and to take revenge."

"Do you believe this?"  
(Martha's faith revealed)

I am a "Martha". I can't help it, I like to be busy, get things done. It's the way I am wired. You remember Martha, the sister of Mary and Lazarus, who was too busy to sit down and talk with Jesus when he came to their home for a visit. (Luke 10:38-42) Martha was distracted by all of the preparations that had to be made for their important guest and she complained to Jesus about her sister Mary who was doing nothing to help her and was content to sit at Jesus' feet and listen quietly. Jesus gently rebukes Math, telling her that Mary had made the better choice. He reminds her that service to God is important, but it is our devotion that really matters. Like Martha, I am so often distracted by what needs to be done that I miss out on presence of the Lord and the opportunity to deepen my faith and grow closer to Jesus. So when I read this passage, I am encouraged to know that there is another side of Martha in which her deep faith is revealed to us.

Lazarus was sick and near death when Mary and Martha sent word to Jesus. Jesus loved this family very much but he did not go to them immediately. He waited until he knew that Lazarus had died so that His power over death could be shown to the disciples and all of the others who would have gathered to mourn with Mary and Martha. Upon Jesus' arrival in Bethany, Martha runs out to meet Him, crying "Lord, if you had been here my brother would not have died. But I know that **even now** God will give you whatever you ask." What incredible faith!!! Her brother had been dead for four days yet her faith in Jesus is so strong that she believes that he can bring her brother back to life. Jesus says to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies and whoever lives, and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" Martha, who previously was so busy "serving" Jesus that she couldn't make time to get to know him, doesn't hesitate and her deep faith is revealed to us. "Yes Lord," she told him, "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world." Her statement of faith is exactly the response that Jesus wants from me and from you. Jesus continues, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" Then Jesus commands Lazarus to come out of the grave. Martha's faith and her witness to who Jesus is has an enormous impact on the situation. Our faith in god and belief that he hears our prayers has more power to impact people's lives than any "busy work" we could do for them or Him.

We are called to be humble servants and we know that without works our faith is dead. But through Martha I have learned, first and foremost, that I must do everything I can to deepen my faith, to grow closer to Jesus Christ, to pray and sit quietly at His feet and listen so that I might discern the areas in which I will be the best servant. Lord Jesus, I pray that I would, like Mary, make the better choice and learn to be still and soak you in a little bit every day. I pray for a faith as strong and sure as Martha's, believing that nothing is impossible for You who has overcome death. Help me to live a life that reveals to

others the power and the promise of the resurrection. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

John 8:1-11

4/11/11

Connie Wilson

How many times have we been quick to judge others? We're all guilty of doing that, but we do not know the circumstances of the other person's life...so how can we judge. When Jesus appeared in the temple courts and sat down to teach, the teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery. In trying to trick Jesus into either saying to stone her, as was Moses' law, or execute her which would go against Roman law which did not permit the Jews to carry out their own executions, they asked Him what they should do. However, Jesus instead turned their question to them and said, "If anyone of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her". How many of us would be able to throw the first stone? I know I certainly wouldn't be able to. I used to be judgmental, but by accepting Christ into my heart, I now know the hurt it can cause. I especially noticed it when I was working...I refused to buy into the office gossip and politics. Did it make me popular? Probably not...did it make my peers respect me? You bet!! Especially the ones I worked FOR.

So before judging someone, stop and think...none of us knows what that person is going through until we walk in their shoes. Most people try to hide their problems/trials/tribulations they're going through and until we walk with them, we don't know what they're going through.

Heavenly Father, help me to see others as You see them...help me to reach out to help them in any way that I can instead of judging them. I ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior. Amen!

"Just assign me one of the Scripture passages." That was my comment to MaryRuth when I said I would write one of the Lenten devotionals. When I looked up the verses, I thought that it was a confusing passage. After consulting several commentaries, reading the passage in several translations, I decided it was time to ask God for wisdom and understanding. Why is it I don't go to Him in the first place? When will I ever learn that lesson? Am I just like the Pharisees that Jesus is talking to in this passage? How clear does it have to be? Jesus is saying that we are of this world and He is not. He is returning to His Father, and there will be many left behind because they do not believe He is the Son of God.

During the Lenten season there is a basic truth for me to remember. Jesus died so that I might have eternal life. He conquered death and is now with God and is preparing a place for me with Him for eternity. I may not have all my questions answered in this life, but I believe God and trust His Word even when I don't have the answers.

A favorite hymn of mine seems to say it best.

What can wash my sins away?  
Nothing but the blood of Jesus;  
What can make me whole again?  
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

For my pardon this I see,  
Nothing but the blood of Jesus;  
For my cleansing this my plea,  
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Nothing can for sin atone,  
Nothing but the blood of Jesus;  
Naught of good that I have done,  
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

This is all my hope and peace,  
Nothing but the blood of Jesus;  
This is all my righteousness,

Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

John 8:31-42  
Sharon Evans

4/13/11

"The Truth will make you free !" Do you know the joy and freedom that comes from the submission to God and his Word? In today's world, freedom usually means the freedom to do as you please. This modern idea of freedom though is a mask for the servitude we experience from following one's selfish needs and desires. How hard it is to not want the finer things in life, to expend our energy towards making our selves happy by buying bigger and better material things. And how happy does this really make us?

Jesus offers his disciples true freedom, freedom from the slavery of fear of what others might think of us, freedom from hurtful desires and freedom from the power of sin. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we can choose to walk in His way of love and holiness.

I am not saying that it is easy but if we are followers and listen to the words of Jesus, he will give us grace and power. Let us ask the Lord to open our ears to his Word so that we may be attentive to his voice. This will truly set us free.

Dear Jesus:

Thank you for the promise of eternal life that you have given us and for the path to live a true and righteous life on earth. Help us when we stray from that path and fall back to selfish thoughts and deeds for it is only through servitude to you that we find true freedom and peace.

## ASV

- <sup>51</sup> Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my word, he shall never see death.
- <sup>52</sup> The Jews said unto him, Now we know that thou hast a demon. Abraham died, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my word, he shall never taste of death.
- <sup>53</sup> Art thou greater than our father Abraham, who died? and the prophets died: whom makest thou thyself?
- <sup>54</sup> Jesus answered, If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing: it is my Father that glorifieth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God;
- <sup>55</sup> and ye have not known him: but I know him; and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be like unto you, a liar: but I know him, and keep his word.
- <sup>56</sup> Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad.
- <sup>57</sup> The Jews therefore said unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?
- <sup>58</sup> Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was born, I am.
- <sup>59</sup> They took up stones therefore to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple.

## CEV

- <sup>51</sup> I tell you for certain that if you obey my words, you will never die."
- <sup>52</sup> Then the people said, "Now we are sure that you have a demon. Abraham is dead, and so are the prophets. How can you say that no one who obeys your words will ever die?" <sup>53</sup> Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are?"
- <sup>54</sup> Jesus replied, "If I honored myself, it would mean nothing. My Father is the one who honors me. You claim that he is your God, <sup>55</sup> even though you don't really know him. If I said I didn't know him, I would be a liar, just like all of you. But I know him, and I do what he says. <sup>56</sup> Your father Abraham was really glad to see me."
- <sup>57</sup> "You are not even fifty years old!" they said. "How could you have seen Abraham?"
- <sup>58</sup> Jesus answered, "I tell you for certain that even before Abraham was, I was, and I am." <sup>59</sup> The people picked up stones to kill Jesus, but he hid and left the temple.

John 10:31-42  
Joel Buice

4/15/11

### **"Chosen by God"**

Have you ever said "just show me the bottom line"? The scene in today's scripture has Jesus in the temple at the Feast of Dedication when there would be large numbers of Jewish leaders in addition to many worshipers present. The Jews were trying to pin down Jesus by asking him to plainly tell them if he was the Son of God. If these Jews were included as part of His flock, they surely would have known that Jesus indeed was the Son of God. They had themselves witnessed the miracles and powers that Jesus displayed in healing the sick and lame among other works. Why did they still choose not to believe? The scriptures say that God Himself must choose to reveal himself to us-that we are chosen to be sheep within the flock. These Jews were not of the flock; therefore they did not recognize Him. What about you and me? The Bible says if we confess with our mouths that Jesus is Lord and believe in our hearts that God raised him from the dead, we will be saved. No, we have not seen first-hand the miracles of Jesus but we have, by the grace of God, been given faith and the reality of a personal relationship with the living God. So here's the bottom line, are you a sheep within God's flock?

Good Shepherd full of love and Grace  
Reveal to us this day Your Face  
Grant us simple faith Unswerving  
Even though we're Undeserving  
Remind us this and every Day  
That we are yours a joyous Ray

Father God, thank you for your Son Jesus and for his life, death and resurrection. Help us to daily remind ourselves how privileged we are to be called a sheep of the Good Shepherd. Amen.

ASV

<sup>45</sup> Many therefore of the Jews, who came to Mary and beheld that which he did, believed on him.

<sup>46</sup> But some of them went away to the Pharisees, and told them the things which Jesus had done.

<sup>47</sup> The chief priests therefore and the Pharisees gathered a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many signs.

<sup>48</sup> If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.

<sup>49</sup> But a certain one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all,

<sup>50</sup> nor do ye take account that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.

<sup>51</sup> Now this he said not of himself: but, being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation;

<sup>52</sup> and not for the nation only, but that he might also gather together into one the children of God that are scattered abroad.

<sup>53</sup> So from that day forth they took counsel that they might put him to death.

<sup>54</sup> Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews, but departed thence into the country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim; and there he tarried with the disciples.

<sup>55</sup> Now the passover of the Jews was at hand: and many went up to Jerusalem out of the country before the passover, to purify themselves.

<sup>56</sup> They sought therefore for Jesus, and spake one with another, as they stood in the temple, What think ye? That he will not come to the feast?

Matt 26:14-27:66  
Gary Chorpensing

4/17/11

The passage defined for this day's reading runs to 128 verses. That's a lot of verses to read at one sitting. But sometimes it really helps to take whole stories all at once, even if they are long. That's especially true of this particular story.

It's a story full of all sorts of emotion and drama - a story of betrayal, abandonment, violence and injustice, hatred and arrogance, humility and self-sacrifice, mercy and forgiveness, grief and hope. Somehow all those ugly and beautiful things are held together in this wrenching story of 128 verses. Jesus is crushed amid that avalanche of evil, yet he remains uncrushed. In fact, like a seed buried in a landslide, he will, we know, sprout up again and bloom in just a few days time like a flower amid the rubble of human sin.

Lord Jesus, give us eyes of faith to be able to see your saving power in the midst of the brokenness of our troubled world. Amen.

## ASV

<sup>1</sup> Behold, my servant, whom I uphold; my chosen, in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the Gentiles.

<sup>2</sup> He will not cry, nor lift up his voice, nor cause it to be heard in the street.

<sup>3</sup> A bruised reed will he not break, and a dimly burning wick will he not quench: he will bring forth justice in truth.

<sup>4</sup> He will not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set justice in the earth; and the isles shall wait for his law.

<sup>5</sup> Thus saith God Jehovah, he that created the heavens, and stretched them forth; he that spread abroad the earth and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein:

<sup>6</sup> I, Jehovah, have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thy hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles;

<sup>7</sup> to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house.

## CEV

<sup>1</sup>Here is my servant! I have made him strong. He is my chosen one; I am pleased with him. I have given him my Spirit, and he will bring justice to the nations. <sup>2</sup>He won't shout or yell or call out in the streets.

<sup>3</sup>He won't break off a bent reed or put out a dying flame, but he will make sure that justice is done. <sup>4</sup>He won't quit or give up until he brings justice everywhere on earth, and people in foreign nations long for his teaching. <sup>5</sup>I am the LORD God. I created the heavens like an open tent above. I made the earth and everything

that grows on it. I am the source of life for all who live on this earth, so listen to what I say. <sup>6</sup>I chose you to bring justice, and I am here at your side. I selected and sent you <sup>[a]</sup> to bring light and my promise of hope to the nations. <sup>7</sup>You will give sight to the blind; you will set prisoners free from dark dungeons.

Isaiah 49:1-6  
Gary Chorprenning

4/19/11

Lord, there are some things about this passage of your scriptures that I don't think I understand. I know that you want me to understand your word. But sometimes that isn't easy. Here in these verses someone is speaking about his mission - a mission he has received from you, but who is it?

Is Isaiah speaking of himself? Is he speaking of his own mission from you? You are doing through him some of these things he speaks of, at least on some level, aren't you? It is Isaiah's mission to bring your light to the nations, to reveal your redemption.

But somehow, it seems to me that you are speaking past Isaiah to someone who is bigger than Isaiah, to someone whose mission is deeper and bigger than Isaiah's. The prophet was an earlier and smaller forerunner of this greater One. These words that Isaiah wrote down so long before are meant for Jesus, aren't they?

These are words for Jesus. You gave them to Isaiah to store them up for Jesus, for when Jesus' time came. When your eternal Son came down and became flesh and blood, he did become nothing (v.4 - see Phil. 2:7). The powerful ones of this world thought he was insignificant (v. 6 - 1 Cor. 1:24-31), but he is your power and your light for all the world.

Lord Jesus, give us eyes to see the brightness of your light, and by the power of your Spirit, make us to shine with your light, so that through us your light might shine out into the darkness. Amen.

This Isaiah was a 'power broker' when Assyria was subjugating Israel. Not unlike Billy Graham, his mission served 4 Kings: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz & Hezekiah. He was an encourager for God in Jerusalem during Assyrian domination in 720 B.C..

In this Passage, Isaiah is standing up to those defiling him (spitting in his face ). He says he will not be put to shame, for God will sustain him ( and us, if we stand with Him ). He asks 'who should I fear as long as God is with me?'. Indeed all the evil on Earth cannot overcome our Lord.

Isaiah says 'let those run over us, but we will not be overcome.' We stand in the face of evil, for His Name's sake. He says "let us stand together".

Encouragement, that is Isaiah's message. Hope against the prideful and arrogant is the weapon of choice. If we have not claimed His Promises, we are not accepting His Gift.

Let us pray to the God of our Salvation

Thank you Lord for Messengers like Isaiah. We Praise you for raising one to deliver your words to us. We accept Jesus as our Lord of Truth and Mercy, as Your Messenger. We Pray The Holy Spirit will convict us to stand in the face of evil, and give to us the exact response for the occasion.

In Jesus' Name, Amen

Exodus 12:1-8  
Tom Knight

4/21/11

Abib is the first month of the Jewish calendar; this verse appears to institute a new beginning. The Passover is celebrated at sunset, right when the first born of Egypt was slain. The lamb sacrificed, its blood used to mark the door, without blemish, clearly a substitution for the firstborn.

The meal was eaten as if in haste. The lamb was roasted whole, no time to butcher or wait for slower cooking methods. Bread was to be unleavened; no time for yeast to rise. The bitter herbs could be an allusion to suffering of slavery.

We have been freed from slavery. The Lamb of God was given in substitution for us, as a willing sacrifice. It is well for us to remember the slavery from which we have been freed. There are others who are in the midst of that slavery, and this is the perfect time of year to remember what was been done for us. We need to realize that there are others who have yet to make the journey from a land of slavery, to join us upon a journey of promise towards true freedom.

Precious Lord, thank-you for being willing to come and give Yourself for us. Help us to see the others whom we can invite to join us on the journey. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

Isaiah 52:13-53:12  
Tom Knight

4/22/11

This is the last of the Servant Songs to be found in the book of Isaiah. This gives us a picture of the suffering servant. To have been God and taken the form of a man, who can comprehend that step alone? To go further and be no one of any note, can we ourselves take such a step for those around us? Head down into the depths of grief and be able to take on the sorrow of those near us...to bear the ultimate humiliation because you know that it will bring comfort for those around you. How do we know that Christ does indeed love us? The suffering that Christ endured on our behalf upon the cross, were he merely taking such punishment as He deserved, but to take that horrible execution, and to make it into an act of compassion which bridges that gap of all history, how can we not marvel? The very fact he took a punishment that He did not deserve, a punishment which transcends our understanding of horror, embraced it, as one of us, how can we not see He has bridged the gap of theory and made His compassion concrete. The contemplation of the act only brings one to awe. Hallelujah, what a Savior!

Lord, In our small understanding of what you accomplished for us at the cross may we yield ourselves to You that we might see your hand work through us to accomplish more than we can ask or think. In the name of Jesus, amen.

It was late in a nerve-wracking day and an awful reality was setting in on the followers of Jesus. The Gospel account focuses on the large group of women who have served Him from the early days in Galilee. At the end of the day it is the ladies who were steadfast and would be the ones to take care of final things. The group represented extended family, friends and associates. They represented lives Jesus touched. It is the women who would provide the final loving touch. It is the women who were the backbone support.

It is also a fatally flawed concept to believe that Jesus and the church were and are operationally poor. Rather, some suggest the women provided funds. In addition, an exceptional time called for an exceptional solution. Joseph of Arimathea was a disciple of financial means and politically connected. He was a man who could approach Pilate and persuade him to turn over a body, retrieving it from a process designed to be a warning spectacle for weeks.

Bottom line, at the end of the day, a group of lowly women and a heroic disciple set in process the means for civilization's most important event - The resurrection. How wonderful they arose to the call and were so used.

We need, like the example of the women, to continue serving Him and like the heroic disciple be ready with the means and skills to do as we are called.

Prayer: Help me Lord to sense and recognize what you would have me do this day and all the tomorrows you grant me, and do it! Amen

## ASV

<sup>1</sup>On Sunday morning while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance. <sup>2</sup>She ran to Simon Peter and to Jesus' favorite disciple and said, "They have taken the Lord from the tomb! We don't know where they have put him."

<sup>3</sup>Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. <sup>4</sup>They ran side by side, until the other disciple ran faster than Peter and got there first. <sup>5</sup>He bent over and saw the strips of linen cloth lying inside the tomb, but he did not go in.

<sup>6</sup>When Simon Peter got there, he went into the tomb and saw the strips of cloth. <sup>7</sup>He also saw the piece of cloth that had been used to cover Jesus' face. It was rolled up and in a place by itself. <sup>8</sup>The disciple who got there first then went into the tomb, and when he saw it, he believed. <sup>9</sup>At that time Peter and the other disciple did not know that the Scriptures said Jesus would rise to life. <sup>10</sup>So the two of them went back to the other disciples.

#### Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene (Mark 16.9-11)

<sup>11</sup>Mary Magdalene stood crying outside the tomb. She was still weeping, when she stooped down <sup>12</sup>and saw two angels inside. They were dressed in white and were sitting where Jesus' body had been. One was at the head and the other was at the foot. <sup>13</sup>The angels asked Mary, "Why are you crying?"

She answered, "They have taken away my Lord's body! I don't know where they have put him."

<sup>14</sup>As soon as Mary said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there. But she did not know who he was. <sup>15</sup>Jesus asked her, "Why are you crying? Who are you looking for?"

She thought he was the gardener and said, "Sir, if you have taken his body away, please tell me, so I can go and get him."

<sup>16</sup>Then Jesus said to her, "Mary!"

She turned and said to him, "Rabboni." The Aramaic word "Rabboni" means "Teacher."

<sup>17</sup>Jesus told her, "Don't hold on to me! I have not yet gone to the Father. But tell my disciples that I am going to the one who is my Father and my God, as well as your Father and your God." <sup>18</sup>Mary Magdalene then went and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord. She also told them what he had said to her.