

March 30 - April 30, 2008
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A photograph of a wooden suspension bridge with a rope railing, crossing a river in a misty, forested area. The bridge is made of wooden planks and is supported by thick ropes. The background is a dense forest of trees, partially obscured by mist or fog. The overall atmosphere is serene and natural.

Northminster
Daily
Devotions

Northminster Devotionals

He is risen! He is risen, indeed!

These devotionals have been crafted to guide our Christian family in this season, as we seek to live as “resurrection people with Easter in our hearts!” May they be a blessing to you as we are guided through the daily bible readings from the One Year Bible.

Also discover the “Sunday” Small Group Study Guides that have been provided here for small group, family or individual use (*anytime during the week!*). This material, based upon the Serendipity Bible for Groups (1989 edition), complements Sunday morning worship at NPC, and is a launching point for going more in-depth.

This resource has come to you because people from NPC have offered their gifts, to be a blessing to the entire Northminster community, to Tucson and beyond. Don't forget ... this entire resource is on our website - www.godmorning.org - so tell your friends!

If you would like to use your God-given talent to become a part of the devotional writing team, call the church at 520-327-7121 and talk to Publications Editor, Jim Peck. This is a very flexible ministry and can be done from anywhere!

The Best Teacher Ever

by Andy Ross

“But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” -Luke 9:20

Can you remember who your favorite teachers were/are now, in your school days? And why? Here would be a short-list of my criteria:

- e They arranged really cool field trips.
- e They were interesting and energetic, and not boring.
- e They were fun, creative, or at least lively.
- e They really respected what you could do, and challenged you.

Do you see where I’m going with this? Jesus is more than the “best Teacher ever” - he is the Messiah. He is the Anointed One of God who has come to offer the hope of God for a dying world. Jesus came to teach us how to find salvation, and also live a new and whole life in him. Just think about my criteria above as it relates to Jesus ...

- e He sent his disciples on field trips! ... Healing, helping and telling.
- e Jesus was energetic! He lectured sometimes, but also walked on water!
- e Jesus was creative! He was transfigured on the mountain, but also cared for struggling people in the valleys.
- e Jesus challenges US! “You give something to eat!” “Who do you say I am?”

Isn’t it wonderful that everyday we have with Jesus is a new and interesting “classroom”? Isn’t it wonderful that he is there to teach us, challenge us, and invite us to declare and demonstrate that he is our Savior each and every day?

Youth: How do you think Jesus acts as a “teacher” for you now? How do you learn and grow in God?

Adults: Describe some great teachers you’ve had. How can God continue to teach you? What “chapter” of the text of God’s life in us, do you need additional tutoring today? And what are some ways you can be used of Jesus to help others learn of his love and truth?

Prayer: Dear Lord, thank you for being our Savior, Messiah, Teacher and Friend! Help us to keep learning how to live each day in you. Amen.

Finishing Last

by Jennifer Monroe

Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. -Psalm 73:25-26

Have you ever heard the phrase “Nice guys finish last?” Many of us can probably think of examples of nice, good, righteous people who seem to get a bum rap, and malevolent, scheming, evil-minded people who seem to prosper. It’s so frustrating when life seems to reward people for being hateful and arrogant, and punish others for being compassionate and humble. The writer of Psalm 73 can certainly identify with this kind of aggravation. In fact, he even envies the wicked, for it seems like they have no problems! They are healthy, and free from struggles common to everyone else. They are arrogant, malicious and evil, claiming to be even wiser than God himself. They are careless and carefree, always increasing in wealth. It’s as though the psalmist is crying out, “What gives, God? Here I am, doing everything right, trying to live a righteous and pure life, and I get nothing! It’s not fair!”

All it takes, however, is a little time in the presence of God to bring the author back to reality: “When I tried to understand all this, it was oppressive to me till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny” (*Psalm 73:16-17*). What he comes to realize is that earthly riches and success mean nothing when compared to the experience of walking hand-in-hand with the creator of the universe. His bitterness and jealousy had hardened his heart and made him “a brute beast,” but a gentle reminder of the long-range, kingdom perspective prompts him to keep in mind that the glory of the wicked is short-lived and lasts less time than a breath. Even though his health and welfare may be weakened, “God is the strength of [his] heart and [his] portion forever.” It’s good for us also to be reminded that, in the economy of the Kingdom, “many who are first will be last, and the last first” (*Mark 10:31*).

Youth: Have you ever felt like you “finished last,” even though you did everything right? How did that feel?

Adults: Can you identify with the Psalmist’s complaints, and his comfort?

Prayer: Lord, we confess our bitterness and short-sightedness and pray that you will remind us of what really has value in your Kingdom. Amen.

Called In To Be Sent Out

by Dick Leon

Go, I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. -Luke 10:3

Have you ever wondered why God has been so gracious to you? Think of all the mighty ways God has blessed your life since you came to him in faith. Psalm 103 has a wonderful invitation: "Forget not all his benefits - who forgives all your sins, and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion ..."

We who are followers of Jesus Christ are so richly blessed we cannot begin to count the ways our lives have been deeply enriched by God!

Why has God done this?

Is it just to make us happy? Is it just to give us eternal life? Is it just to satisfy our needs and most of our wants? Yes ... and no!

The main reason we are "*called in*" to the family of God is so we can be "*sent out*" to the hurting world around us! This rhythm repeats itself over and over again in Scripture: I will bless you - so that you will be a blessing! Every theophany - experience of God's presence - in the Bible begins with a word of grace and ends with a command to go serve!

So, the question for all of us lambs in this world of wolves is this: how are we serving others in Jesus' name? God's intent is that we become a missional people. This does not mean we are all to go to Africa or Central America or the frozen steppes of Russia ... although some will be called there. More likely it means you and I are sent to our neighbors, our colleagues at work, our classmates in school, our community near and far to show God's love by serving the most elementary needs of other people.

This will not always be easy (*we are lambs in a wolves' world!*) ... but it will always be good (*we are the children of God!*)

Youth: Scripture challenges us all to find at least one way to serve others right where we are. In your school, what would that be for you?

Adults: Have you found at least one 'missional cause' in which you can be personally involved in helping others and witnessing to your faith?

Prayer: Gracious Lord, your call to come to faith has so richly blessed our lives, let us not betray that calling by neglecting to be your hands and voices by serving others in this world. Amen.

Deuteronomy 21:1—22:30

Luke 9:51—10:12

Psalm 74:1-23

Proverbs 12:11

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 2 SCRIPTURE READINGS

Be Careful About What You Say!

by Frank Shallenberger

From the fruit of his lips a man is filled with good things as surely as the work of his hands rewards him. -Proverbs 12:14

The Living Bible translates verse 13 thusly: “lies will get any man into trouble, but honesty is its own defense.” James says the tongue is a source of corrupting evil. It can ruin our lives as well as the lives of others. How much better it is to watch our speech, control what we say. How many people praise God and Jesus on Sunday and then use those names in a blasphemous manner the rest of the week? We should always stop for a moment and think about what we are going to say in any situation.

Every man I know has been confronted at one time or another by this question from his spouse “How do I look dear?” And every man I know has learned a lesson about how to carefully consider his response. “You look wonderful” when she knows she really doesn’t can get a man into as much difficulty as saying “That’s not very flattering to you, my dear” when she actually feels that she looks like a million dollars. James has a good recommendation for every one “Be quick to listen and slow to speak.”

When we consider everything we say carefully, choose our words with discrimination and avoid flattery we will quickly notice the blessings that fall upon us. When we refuse to do this, we can rationalize all we want but inevitably, careless speech brings its own rewards. How foolish is that kind of behavior!

We will always reap what we sow. Just as hard work will buy us all kinds of good things in life, so careful and benevolent speech will bear good fruit. God blesses each one of us by our works (*Romans 2:6*). Considerate speech bears good fruit and by a man's fruit shall he be known.

Youth: Do you choose your speech by how the gang speaks or does your speech reflect your upbringing?

Adults: Do you forget the second commandment in your everyday life? Thou shall not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain!

Prayer: Father, we don’t always consider our speech carefully. We tend to reflect the speech of those around us. For that reason give us the wisdom to choose our companions carefully. Amen.

First Priorities

by Marshall Worden

When you have entered the land the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance and have taken possession of it and settled in it, take some of the first fruits of all that you produce from the soil of the land the Lord your God is giving you and put them in a basket. Then go to the place the Lord your God will choose as a dwelling for his Name, when you have finished setting aside a tenth of all your produce in the third year, the year of the tithe, you shall give it to the Levite, the alien, the fatherless and the widow, so that they may eat in your towns and be satisfied. -Deuteronomy 26:1-2,12

Today's passage from Deuteronomy is absolutely clear: my first priority should be to worship God. Unfortunately, I often fail to live that out on a daily basis. Instead, like a lot of my friends, one of the first things I do each day is to enter my email account, read the New York Times on-line and review the messages that have come in during the last six to eight hours. While time for prayer and reading Scripture is still there, too often those first priorities with Jesus get short changed.

If that is happening in my private life, what's going on in my public life? Am I putting Christ first in the rest of my daily life? How are others seeing me, and us and Northminster in the public realm?

- e At work. Do we honor Christ in the way we treat customers and coworkers and in the way we do our work?
- e In the community. Do we honor Christ by showing compassion to those suffering from injustice and those who are disadvantaged?
- e At home. Do we honor Christ in how we spend time with family and friends?
- e At church. Do we honor Christ in how we speak to one another and how we use our time and money?

Youth: How are you getting along with friends at school? Do you think Jesus is happy with the way you speak to and treat others?

Adults: In the US, how we use money is one of the big indicators of who we are. Do we use our money in a way that truly reflects how generous Jesus has been to us?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for giving us friends, family, home, church, resources and direction for how we can better serve and honor you. Amen.

Deuteronomy 26:1—27:26

Luke 10:38—11:13

Psalms 76:1-12

Proverbs 12:15-17

FRIDAY, APRIL 4 SCRIPTURE READINGS

The Words We Speak

by Judy Williams

Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.

-Proverbs 12:18

Solomon in his wisdom gives much advice throughout his proverbs regarding how, when and why we are to speak. How often I am apt to offer an opinion when I don't even have all the facts. Countless times I catch myself giving a response to a friend when I haven't really understood the question. Think of all the times each of us has entered into conversations that tend to become gossipy.

In the third chapter of the book of James we read, "... *the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body...*" When we consider the harm done to ourselves and others through lies and exaggeration, through false advertising and evil propaganda, through unkept promises and fraudulent claims, we begin to comprehend all that reckless speech can do.

And then there are the times we may have been asked to do a task when we simply are unable to comply. Instead of saying a simple, "No, I can't do it", we begin to invent excuses. We are reminded in Matthew 5:37, "*Simply let your "Yes" be "Yes", and your "No" be "No"...*"

But Solomon also reminds us that "*the tongue of the wise brings healing.*" Words of encouragement, appreciation, gratitude and love spoken in sincerity all benefit others. Words of apology and forgiveness are ways we can bring healing to relationships. And words of truth about Jesus and God's grace are ways we can bring healing to those who long for it.

Youth: Think before you speak. Choose your words carefully.

Adults: Think before you speak. Choose your words carefully.

Prayer: Dear Father, help us be aware of times when we are tempted to stretch the truth. Give us strength to put a stop to gossip when it arises. Let us have the insight to know when we are deceiving ourselves or rationalizing a situation. And guide us to speak words that are healing to others. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Small Group Study Guide

We hope you will use this guide to get to know each other, build friendships and community with others, as well as experience encouragement and growth in your faith.

Gathering As God's Family

Welcome - Especially new people.

Ice-Breaker - As for "lost and found" items, do you lose more than you find? How so? Which items are still lost? Recently found?

Growing In God's Word

Bible Study: Luke 15:1-10

- e Who is in Jesus' "mixed audience"? How do they respond to him?
- e How does Jesus' parable of the sheep relate to the muttering of the Pharisees? What is Jesus' point?
- e How do you picture the woman searching for her money? What is Jesus point here?

Bible Application

- e When have you strayed from the Christian faith? What did God use to bring you back?
- e How do these stories make you feel about your value to God?
- e How could these stories affect your relationships with those you know who wander from the faith?

Going As Ambassadors For Christ

Missional Focus: ??How might God help you be a "compass" for someone who is lost?

Prayer Requests: How can we help you in prayer this week?

Close with Prayer

Watch Out!

by Scott Coverdale

... *Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.* -Luke 12:15

When I lived in Somalia, I knew a man named Hussein Jilo, who was kind and humble and as poor as dirt. He was a refugee from Ethiopia, and his family owned nothing but a tiny grass hut, some ragged clothes, a couple of cook pots, two reed mats, a walking stick, and a copy of the Koran. When East Africa settled into an uneasy truce, Hussein jumped at the chance to repatriate to his homeland. I accompanied him to the border on the back of a dusty Italian army truck. When we arrived, the group of two hundred people crossed a pontoon bridge across the Dolo River. As I said goodbye to my friend, I handed him the small bundle of what constituted his worldly possessions. We laughed at the small burlap sack, not half full.

"You don't have much to start over with," I told him, and offered him some Kenyan shillings as a gift.

Hussein pointed at the sky. "Illahi waa jirta," he said. "God is still there."

We listened to some instructions by the U.N., and then the group climbed up a hill to where other trucks were ready to continue the journey. I never saw my friend again.

In Luke 12, Jesus has a lot to say about wealth and our attitude towards it. He didn't say that wealth was horrible. What he did say is that it will not save us, will not satisfy us and has the potential to distract us from things that really matter. My friend Hussein had nearly no goods when he returned to his homeland. He did, however, have confidence that God knew his situation and would see him through. I think that his material poverty had cleared his vision to see where his real security was.

Youth: Why do you think Jesus warned us to watch out for riches?

Adults: If you were flat broke, what understanding might you gain that is presently obscured?

Prayer: Dear God of true riches, please help us to be free from the constraints and temptations of worldly wealth. Help us to see that you care for us better than money, better than the stuff that occupies our lives. Amen.

I Want To Be Prepared

by Karen Foss

But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

Have you ever been at school or at your place of work and maybe there's little to do so you start talking and laughing with a friend or co-worker? All of a sudden the teacher or boss shows up and wants to know if you don't have anything better to do? Yup! Been there - done that! How much better it would have been if she came in unexpectedly and found me hard at work.

We all want to please our teachers and bosses, don't we? What about our Lord and Savior? Surely, we want to please him.

When he left he told us he'd return. He didn't give a date or time - just that he'd be back. That was such a long time ago. We've been waiting all these generations for his return. Perhaps he's delaying his return so we can help build his kingdom. Yes, we can do that right here on earth by spreading the gospel everywhere - everyday. We don't have to be missionaries in some far off land. We can do it in our work, at home with a small Bible study group or at a social gathering. Just a few chosen words might do the trick. All we have to do is plant the seed. He'll do the rest.

Youth and Adults: When Jesus returns, what will you be doing?

Prayer: Dear heavenly father, I want to be prepared when you return. I pray you will find me working to build your kingdom by spreading the good news. Amen.

Deuteronomy 32:28-52

Luke 12:8-34

Psalms 78:56-64

Proverbs 12:24

TUESDAY, APRIL 8 SCRIPTURE READINGS

Fruit

by Jerry Smith

So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, "For three years now I've been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?" -Luke 13:7

Fruit tree examples of Godly living were frequently used in the Bible such as Psalm 1:3, Jeremiah 17:8 and John 15:1-8. In Matthew 21:19 Jesus cursed a fig tree because it had no fruit. So the question for us believing Christians is not whether we are to bear fruit, but what kind of fruit. The first thing most Christians might consider as acceptable fruit is witnessing. I agree with 1 Peter 3:15 that you should always be prepared to share what God has done for you through Jesus Christ to any one who asks you. But there is other fruit too.

Look at Galatians 5:22, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control. All of these fruits are given to you for the benefit of others. Even self control is to benefit others because if you can't control yourself you are going to hurt others.

Do you have and exhibit these fruits? Have you been grafted on to Jesus the True Vine? God the Gardener promised his Spirit to any one who asked him. The gardener in our Luke 13 story asked his master to give him a year to prune the roots of the tree so fertilizer would go into nourishing the fig tree rather than merely increasing the root structure.

In my youth I lived on a fruit farm with apple and cherry trees. Every Spring the apple trees were pruned of all the sucker branches. These were branches that wouldn't bear fruit but grew much faster and would rob the fruit bearing branches of needed nourishment. We should ask God to prune the suckers from our life that hinder our fruit bearing and we should liberally fertilize our Christian life with his Word and his Spirit.

Youth: Have you ever considered yourselves as God's fruit bearers? You are, so make it the fruit of the Spirit.

Adults: Until Christ's return or our demise we have the choice to be God's fruit bearers. He has all the necessary equipment to make us successful. All we have to do is ask for it and then do it.

Prayer: Father thank you for this opportunity to be your fruit bearers. And help to see everyone we encounter as if they were Jesus asking us to share his fruit.

The Lord Makes His Point

by Anne Price

Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them. -Joshua 1:6

When Moses had died before reaching the Holy Land, Joshua was given the marching orders from the Lord to complete the journey with the Israelites. From verse 6 to verse 18 we read, “Be strong and courageous” three times and once “Be strong and very courageous.” This reading certainly got my attention.

As I transcribe my grandfather’s World War I journal, I see a part of his character that I never knew. He noted going to communion with actual dates. It was an important part of his spiritual life. The descriptions of the battles that he led his men into told me of the courage that he had. It was fueled by the love of God, family and country.

There may have even been evidence of tears on his journal as he cried over the loss of his fellow soldiers. Yet, he went on to fulfill his duty until the end of the war. He was to fight for his country again in World War II.

I look around the church and see men that I know have fought in more recent battles. Their families may not even know the details of what they endured.

To be strong and courageous is a mighty order for all of us in our own lives. We have our own battlefields. Let us not be discouraged, for the Lord, our God is with us no matter what.

Youth: Do you ever feel fear in going into a new place?

Adults: May we accept that we may be strong and courageous, for we are never completely alone.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank for you for giving me the strength to follow your directions in the Book that never ends. Amen.

Deuteronomy 34:1—Joshua 2:24

Luke 13:22—14:6

Psalms 79:1-13

Proverbs 12:26

THURSDAY, APRIL 10 SCRIPTURE READINGS

Where Are You Going To Walk?

by Frank Shallenberger

In the way of righteousness there is life; along that path is immortality.
-Proverbs 12:28

Have you ever taken a walk through an area which you had never visited before? If you did, you most probably assessed what appeared to be the easiest way to go. Perhaps it was a hiking trail that many others had used before you. Perhaps it was a walkway worn thin by a herd of deer, cattle or sheep. Regardless, you most likely chose what appeared to be the best way to go.

Each morning in our lives we enter into a new area, a new phase, into which we have never entered before. When choosing which way to go, we are usually left with two choices: what Solomon calls “the way of righteousness, the spiritual way” and “the carnal way.” The “way of righteousness,” the spiritual way, is a direct path to “immortality.” Paul wrote in Romans 5:21 that “just as sin reigned in death so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” And again, Romans 8:6 states, “the mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace.”

If we can remember anything, we can surely remember that “the wages of sin is death.” Through parable, story, poetry and verse the Bible repeats this message constantly from Genesis to Revelation. But always present as well is the collateral message that our God is a loving God, one who will always forgive a repentant heart.

Youth: Are you as careful to choose the way you choose to live each day as you are the best route to get a big Mac?

Adults: Is your earliest prayer one asking the Holy Spirit to lead you through the day or do you trust yourself to make the best judgment each time you are called upon to do so?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, open our eyes that we might see that your way is the path to immortal life. Through Jesus our Lord and Savior. Amen.

Proverbs 12:27-28

Psalms 80:1-19

Luke 14:7-35

Joshua 3:1—4:24

FRIDAY, APRIL 11 SCRIPTURE READINGS

Step Out In Faith

by Jennifer Hager

Then the Lord said to Joshua, "See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men. March around the city once with all the armed men. Do this for six days." -Joshua 6:2-3

God's command to Joshua shows us a unique perspective of God's will and how he directs us. Joshua is in the wonderful position of God speaking to him directly. Oh, how we all long for that clarity from God. We long to have a relationship with the Lord that will give us a "direct" link to his will.

Then the Lord commands Joshua to march around Jericho with the armed men and do it again for the next six days. Oh no! There goes the clarity. Joshua may have been thinking, "Now what is this? Why do you want me to do this, Lord?" Nevertheless, Joshua did as the Lord commanded and brought down the walls.

Do we step out in faith when the Lord speaks to us? Do we obey his Spirit when the reasons are unclear, uncertain and even frightening? Are we waiting for the Lord to explain the situation and show us the outcome before we follow his way?

Youth: When you are unsure of the way to go, do you stop and ask directions?

Adults: Are you building your relationship with the Lord so that his word to you becomes clearer? Do you follow his path even when you do not know where it will take you?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Almighty God, we ask that you open our hearts to you in your word and in our prayer so that we might listen to you and obey you in faith. We thank you Lord Jesus for your Holy Scriptures from which you give us direction.

Joshua 5:1—7:15

Luke 15:1-32

Psalms 81:1-16

Proverbs 13:1

SATURDAY, APRIL 12 SCRIPTURE READINGS

Small Group Study Guide

We hope you will use this guide to get to know each other, build friendships and community with others, as well as experience encouragement and growth in your faith.

Gathering As God's Family

Welcome - Especially new people.

Ice-Breaker - As a child, did you ever run into your parents' room after a nightmare? What was the dream?

Growing In God's Word

Bible Study: 1 Samuel 3

- e What do you make of Eli's physical disability (v. 2; see 2:33)? What might this and the lamp of the Lord symbolize?
- e Why is the Lord angry with Eli? How has Eli failed to repent?
- e If you were Eli, how would you have reacted to the Lord's words? If you were Samuel, how would you feel repeating them to Eli?
- e What does it mean that Samuel "let none of his words fall to the ground" (v. 19)? How does that compare to Eli?

Bible Application

- e Has the Lord recently convicted you of some sin or failure? How did you react?
- e Do you pray with the attitude of: (a) "speak Lord, for your servant listens" or (b) "listen Lord, for your servant speaks"? How can you learn to listen more and better, and speak less?
- e How do you treat the word of God? What commands have you "let fall to the ground"?

Going As Ambassadors For Christ

Missional Focus: See if you can put this into practice sometime:

Listen to someone's story, tell your story, then share God's story.

Prayer Requests: How can we help you in prayer this week?

Close with Prayer

It Would Have Been Enough!

by Dick Leon

Jesus said to them: "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead." -Luke 16:31

There is a wonderful Jewish liturgy that recites all the things God has done to show his love for his people and after each item the people were to respond in unison: "It would have been enough." So it runs like this:

If you had only freed us from slavery ... It would have been enough!

If you had only given us the Law ... it would have been enough!

If you had only fed us manna in the wilderness ... it would have been enough!

I think you can get the idea. Consider all God has done from the beginning of time to show himself to us as our Loving Creator and Redeemer Lord! Each event of the long string of gracious acts of God would, (or should!) have been enough to bring us to faith!

So, it should not surprise us to hear Jesus' stern warning in today's text. The principle remains ... if our hearts are open to God it does not take a fresh miracle every day to convince us of his love and to accept his rule over our lives. The resurrection is surely the most astounding sign in all history that God could give to us, and it too would have been enough. Sadly, some still hold back from believing ... not because the resurrection is inadequate evidence of God's love for us, but more because their hearts are cold, hard and rigid and bent away from God.

Jesus Christ wants us to see that faith comes from hearts that are willing to believe, it comes from hearts that yearn to know God, it comes from a softness of heart toward God more than from some grand argument of the mind!

Youth: Do you want to believe in God? If so, there is more than enough evidence in all history that God loves you and yearns for your trust in him.

Adults: Looking back on your life, what brought you to faith in Jesus?

Prayer: Mighty Lord, you have done more than any of us could ever have asked of you to show yourself to us and to woo us into

Joshua 9:3—10:43

Luke 16:19—17:10

Psalms 83:1-18

Proverbs 13:4

MONDAY, APRIL 14 SCRIPTURE READINGS

Kingdom Living Here And Now

by Marie Ruiz

Jesus replied, "The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you." -Luke 17:20b-21

"The Kingdom of God is within you!" What a sobering thought, that God has granted you and me a piece of his kingdom so that we may experience first hand God's mercy, grace, love and forgiveness! This Luke passage reminds us of the quest for the knowledge of the Lord's second coming that people have for centuries been trying to identify. And yet in this Scripture passage, God repeatedly tells us that it is not for us to know the exact hour of his return. And for good reason. People who profess the saving knowledge of Christ need to live each day as if Christ were to return today. But how often do we contemplate when we get up in the morning, maybe Christ will return today? Probably very few of us, if we were honest. Instead we are caught up in the issues of life here on earth and some of us will be consumed with a worldly perspective of living for the moment as in the days of Noah (*verse 26*) or Lot (*verse 28*). And yet God revealed his wrath in those days and destroyed whole cities of people, because they were so consumed with self gratification and self preservation, they lost sight of the God who had brought them to the very place they lived and provided for them.

Our lesson for today is clear ... live as if Christ were to return today. Be mindful of the work that God has given you to do on earth and do it willingly without grumbling and with a heart of praise. This is what pleases God and in turn you will fulfill his commands by faith, because ***the kingdom of God is within you!***

Youth: God is in you if you have asked him into your heart! Talk to your mom or dad about how you can please God by the way you live.

Adults: The Pharisees didn't understand "The kingdom of God is within you," but we have his Word to read and understand. Kingdom living is possible if you live as Christ commands.

Prayer: Lord help us shine the light of your kingdom as we live for you each day. Amen.

A God Who Hears

by Jennifer Monroe

And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth? -Luke 18:7-8

Do you believe that God listens to your prayers? Do you believe that when you pray, he actually cares about what you're saying and determines to do something in response? Over and over again in the Bible we are assured that God hears and answers the prayers of his people. Yet, many of us pray as though we don't really think God is listening or like we don't really believe that he cares.

However, the amazing fact is that God has created the universe in such a way as to allow him to be responsive to us. Rather than simply setting up the world and then passively watching it run from a long way away, he is intimately involved in the everyday events of our lives. But, he doesn't treat us like puppets, bouncing us from here to there, arranging and organizing everything in our lives for us. He has given us the free will to either follow him or other gods of our own making. What then is the role of prayer? God wants to be in relationship with human beings, and the primary way we can build that relationship is by communication, talking with him and being honest about our needs. One of the lessons we can learn from the parable of the persistent widow in Luke's Gospel, is that when we boldly and confidently make our requests known to him, God will listen and will answer us. The key seems to be faith. The widow obviously had faith, not only that the judge had the ability to grant her justice, even though he denied her day after day, but also that he eventually would do what she asked. Maybe our first request should be for an ever-increasing faith that actually believes God hears our prayers.

Youth: Do you ever ask God for things? Have you ever received an answer to your prayer?

Adults: Do you really believe that God hears your prayers?

Prayer: Thank you, Father, for hearing us, for listening to our prayers and for caring about what happens to us. Give us the faith to really believe that this is true. Amen.

Joshua 13:1—14:15

Luke 18:1-17

Psalms 85:1-13

Proverbs 13:7-8

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 16 SCRIPTURE READINGS

Living Simple Lives

by Judy Williams

Jesus looked at (the ruler) and said, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." Those who heard this asked, "Who then can be saved?" Jesus replied, "What is impossible with men is possible with God." -Luke 18:24-27

Jesus never let anything distract him from his focus of telling his listeners the good news of God's kingdom. Because his disciples were willing to leave their possessions behind in order to follow him, Jesus wants us, too, to decide which possessions and activities in our lives are keeping us from following him fully.

In a later Proverb we find this passage: *Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, "Who is the Lord?" Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God.* So a truly **simple life** is one which has a good balance of sufficient wealth to care adequately for our daily needs and the needs of those for whom we are responsible, but not more. Once we have **enough**, we are to use the opportunity to share the rest with others who are in need.

It is particularly easy in this present atmosphere of luxury to want more and more things. It is just this situation that reminds me of the importance of counting my blessings. With an attitude of gratitude for all that God has given me, how can I not be thankful and satisfied with my life? How can I not want to share my many blessings with others?

Finally, how many of us have a "clutter" mentality? Do we keep things we no longer need just because we 'might need it someday?' How many unused items in our homes could be put to better use by someone else? How might a thorough closet-cleaning simplify your life and give you more room and time for God's purposes?

Youth: What things in your room have you outgrown that could be passed on to someone else who could really use them?

Adults: How can you resolve to simplify something in your daily life to give yourself more time with God?

Prayer: Dear Lord, help me to live more simply so that I will be better able to focus on things above, not on earthly things. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Jesus Can Always See Us!

by Frank Shallenberger

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but being a short man he could not, because of the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. -Luke 19:1-4

The Bible doesn't tell us how tall Jesus was but we have no reason to believe that he stood out from the crowd because of his height. We might be small, insignificant, to those around us but Jesus sees each one of us just as we are. Just as Zacchaeus was seeking Jesus, so we learn that Jesus was seeking Zacchaeus.

As small as he was, Zacchaeus stood out from the rest of the crowd in Jesus' eyes. Zacchaeus had determined to change his life. He was obviously a man of great importance, a chief tax collector and very rich with ill-gotten gains. Yet he had determined "to give half of" his "possessions to the poor" and "to pay back four times the amount" of money to any person he had ever cheated.

Zacchaeus sought Jesus, "welcomed Jesus gladly," publicly confessed his sins and promised reparation. He invited Jesus to have dinner with him. The public had the obvious reaction, Jesus was dining with a man of ill repute. When Dr. Dobson visited Ted Bundy before his execution there was little praise but a great deal of condemnation.

We know what the public says doesn't make any difference. The only thing that counts is the response Jesus makes, "today salvation has come to this house." Over and over again Jesus tells us he came here on this earth "to seek and to save what was lost." We repentant sinners stand out from the crowd in Jesus eyes because you and I are the reason Jesus came.

Youth: Do you sometimes feel lost in church because you're not tall like some of your friends or your parents? You're never so small that Jesus cannot look directly at you and seek you.

Adults: Are you having a hard time looking at Jesus, do you think you need a sycamore-fig tree to climb?

Prayer: Father of us all, help us to realize that we are never so small and insignificant, so lost in sin that when we become repentant Jesus will not see us. Amen.

Joshua 16:1—18:28

Luke 19:1-27

Psalms 87:1-7

Proverbs 13:11

FRIDAY, APRIL 18 SCRIPTURE READINGS

The Triumphal Entry

by John McKee

A crowd followed Jesus
As he went out from Jericho
After healing two there who were blind ...

With their eyesight restored,
Both men joined the great crowd
In joyful praise the two followed behind.

When his large entourage
Drew near to Jerusalem,
Calling two of his Disciples aside,

Jesus told them to go
Into a village nearby
Where an ass and her young colt were tied ...

He said to untie them
And bring them to him ...
That the prophecy would come to pass ...

*Daughter of Zion, behold
Your King comes to you humbly,
Upon a colt, the foal of an ass.*

Bringing the ass and her colt
To him as he'd directed,
The two placed their cloaks upon them ...

And Jesus rode into Jerusalem
Over the palm fronds and the garments
That the joyful crowds spread before him.

They were shouting, "Hosanna
To the Son of David!
Blessed is he who comes ...

In the name of the Lord!
Hosanna in the highest!"
Over the timbrels, cymbals and drums..

Small Group Study Guide

We hope you will use this guide to get to know each other, build friendships and community with others, as well as experience encouragement and growth in your faith.

Gathering As God's Family

Welcome - Especially new people.

Ice-Breaker - What do you find best quenches your thirst after a long Saturday afternoon?

Growing In God's Word

- e When were you homesick? What would your correspondence from that time reveal about your innermost yearnings and fears?

Bible Study: Psalm 42 - 43

- e These two Psalms form one unified whole: What refrains and themes are common to each?
- e From 2 Kings 14:11-14, we see hostages being taken from Judah: How might such a situation give birth to these psalms?
- e From the descriptive words and phrases, what diagnosis best fits this psalmist's condition: Thirsty, Depressed, Exiled, Homesick, Hopeful, Plagued by doubt, other?
- e What is the recommended prescription (vv. 5 & 11)? Is this a realistic way to handle grief or depression? Why or why not?
- e What is the difference in the question the foes ask (42:3 & 10) and the question the psalmist asks (42:9)?

Bible Application

- e What causes God to seem far away at times? Who moved (God or you)?
- e How are these psalms helpful when you may wonder where God is?
- e We see how the psalmist deals with depression (cries, talks to himself, reminds himself about God's truth, prays). How do you?
- e Of the adjectives and titles used for God in these psalms, which one best describes your relationship with God?

Going As Ambassadors For Christ

Missional Focus: How might you be a psalm of encouragement to someone this week?

Prayer Requests: How can we help you in prayer this week?

Close with Prayer

What Is Our Base Human Nature?

by Dick Leon

He who ignores discipline comes to poverty and shame, but whoever heeds correction is honored. -Proverbs 13:18

Have you heard the nifty prayer: “Oh Lord, make me the kind of person my dog thinks I am?” Honest and brave people know we are not yet that kind of person and we need a lot of help to become as good as our dogs think we are!

In our “feel good culture,” I hear many pundits trying to say we are all basically good people, we have just gotten a little mixed up or confused along the way. Unfortunately, I think all the evidence points away from this nice idea and tells us instead that if we are left to our own resources we will mess up big time!

I believe our attitude toward discipline and correction stems from the base assumption we carry inside us about being “basically good” or “basically flawed!”

When we acknowledge that we are deeply flawed people we will be more willing to listen to correction and heed all forms of restraint and discipline on our lives!

God’s primary “discipline” to us comes in the form of the Law. Those simple but profound Ten Commandments provide grand boundaries for living a sane and wholesome life. If we could only abide by them! If we “ignore” them, as the Proverb suggests, our lives will surely come to poverty and shame. In the deepest sense we cannot “break the commandments” ... they “break us!” The Commandments stand tall and true, ignore them at your peril, follow them to your honor!

Youth: How do you react to your parent’s discipline? When you ignore it, what is the result? When you heed their corrections, what is the result? If you ignore their discipline is it because you really believe you know better than they what is best for your life?

Adults: Have you thought recently about the “disciplines” of the Ten Commandments for your life? If not, think of them again. They are rich and wonderful outposts of a sane and wholesome life.

Prayer: Gracious Lord, you love us so much you give us clear directions on how we can make life good. Help us to heed your ways every day. Amen.

Proverbs 13:17-19

MONDAY, APRIL 21 SCRIPTURE READINGS

Psalms 89:14-37

Luke 20:27-47

Joshua 22:21—23:16

Choose Carefully

by Scott Coverdale

... Choose for yourselves who you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served ... or the gods of the Amorites ... But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord. -Joshua 24:15

Let's say you want a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, so you go to your favorite grocery store. There are twenty one choices of peanut butter, thirty six choices of jelly and jam, and sixty seven choices of bread. That makes 50,652 possible combinations of ingredients for your dumb sandwich, but who's counting?

When Joshua laid the choices before the people who were going to settle the Promised Land, it may have been mostly rhetorical, but the possibilities were endless. There were lots of gods to choose from in those old-fashioned days: weird little idols made of gold or rocks or cow dung, gods that lived in stars or palm trees or campfire smoke, gods that wanted blood and guts or gods that wanted everybody to have a good time. There were gods for crops, gods for sex, gods for rain, gods for good luck in the camel races. Funny, huh?

I think that we have as many choices as the Israelites did as they stood there listening to Joshua. We have to choose whether to serve our bank accounts, our political agendas, our national and personal economies, our career paths, social status, or consumer aspirations. We may even have a few weird little idols made with silicon wafers, wheels or ethanol. We may devote ourselves to institutions or teams or nations. Or we may, like Joshua, choose to serve the Lord. Not that we can't have a favorite baseball team or enjoy our careers. It is a question of devotion, a question of loyalty and of primacy. When you get right down to it, it is a question of how we live our lives; of what we live and die for. I don't think that God intends to be one of many interests. I think that God wants to be the paper on which the story of our lives is written.

Youth: Why is it sometimes hard to make up your mind about things?

Adults: How do you make important choices? Is serving the Lord a single choice or a multitude of choices? How?

Prayer: God, please help us to see how the choices we make influence our relationship with you and with others. Amen.

Joshua 24:1-33

TUESDAY, APRIL 22 SCRIPTURE READINGS
Luke 21:1-28

Psalms 89:38-52

Proverbs 13:20-23

Give The Devil His Due But No More

by Jerry Smith

For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. -Psalm 91:11-12

As I read this Psalm, I realized that this was the Devil's second temptation of Christ after his forty days in the wilderness. I just wonder if we realize how wily the Devil really is. Jesus knew. Paul knew, "And put them on [the armor of God] to use so you will be able to stand up to everything the Devil throws your way" (*Ephesians 6:11*). And Peter knew, "Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" (*1 Peter 5:8*).

In the devil's temptation of Jesus, the devil quoted Scripture, although a faulty interpretation. Jesus refuted him by quoting Scripture using the proper interpretation. So it behooves us to know Scripture and to know how to test the spirits found in 1 John 4:1-3 and to stand on verse 4, "He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world."

Paul gave us the armor of God. So put on the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, shod your feet with the Gospel of peace, take the shield of faith, put on the helmet of salvation, and finally the offensive weapon the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. "Pray always in the Spirit" (*Ephesians 6:11-18*). Peter also gave us, "Everything that goes into a life of pleasing God has been miraculously given to us by getting to know, personally and intimately, the one who invited us to God" (*2 Peter 1:3-4a*). Jesus promised, "In this world, you will continue to experience difficulties. But take heart! I've conquered the world" (*John 16:33*).

Youth and Adults: In any conflict, knowing the strengths of your opponent is the first consideration. The second, is knowing your own strengths and how to use them to overcome your opponents strengths. In spiritual warfare, God has given us both strengths in his holy Word.

Prayer: We thank you Father, that you did not give us the Spirit of timidity, but the Spirit of power, of love and self-discipline.

Green And Growing

by Anne Price

They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green. - Psalm 92:14

What happens when the candles on our birthday cakes light up an entire room? I remember long ago when I would blow out the candles easily knowing that I would have one wish. My wishes probably involved something material that I desired.

Recently I had a BIG birthday. Family and friends from all over sent their love. I felt blessed beyond words. No need for a cake, candles and wishes for things. It was time for me to remember the elders that surrounded me with their wisdom, such as parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles. Of course the clergy tried to teach me about God and right from wrong.

The Psalm in its entirety is a celebration of praise to the Lord. The writer speaks of eyes seeing the defeat of enemies, ears hearing the sound of the wicked foes.

Here comes the good part: the righteous will flourish in the courts of our Lord. If a plant is still growing it will need nourishment. As I get older I am more careful about what enters my body, mind and spirit.

Those of us who are considered seniors have the opportunity to continue growing in ways that when we were young we could not even have imagined. We can show those younger that life is not over when we have the chance to retire from our first career. Many of us go to into new fields when we have the chance.

As I have heard: "When you are green you are growing, when you are ripe you are rotten." I plan on staying green. How about you?

Youth: What older person makes you feel happy?

Adults: May we see that getting older can be wonderful if we stay close to our Lord.

Prayer: Father, thank you for letting me continue to grow closer to You and to others. Amen.

Judges 2:10—3:31

THURSDAY, APRIL 24 SCRIPTURE READINGS

Luke 22:1-4-34

Psalm 92:1—93:5

Proverbs 14:1-2

To Live Or Not To Live

by Marie Ruiz

And one of them struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his right ear. But Jesus answered, "No more of this!" And he touched the man's ear and healed him. -Luke 22:50-51

It utterly amazes me that two different scenarios didn't occur the moment one of Jesus' followers chopped the ear off the high priest's servant. I could have easily expected one of the guards accompanying the high priest to retaliate and in turn strike Jesus' servant to the ground. But that is not what happened. In contrast, Jesus immediately restores the priest's servant by touching the man's ear and restoring it to normalcy. Get this picture - it was a bloody mess. Anytime the face or head is lacerated, there is profuse bleeding. But Jesus healed the broken and bruised body as if it never happened. There was no trace of blood, no bruising, no pain. And yet what is most remarkable to me is the lack of response from the high priest and those that came for Jesus in the face of this miraculous moment in the history of our Lord. I would have expected the high priest to reconsider his concern that Jesus was a threat to them after just witnessing the most just of acts. And yet the high priest and those who accompanied him continued to seize him and led him away into captivity and ultimately death on a cross.

We in this imperfect world will always have questions and lack of understanding of what the scriptures record. But one thing is for sure, there was a divine plan from the foundation of the world and all these things need to happen for the fulfillment of prophecy. We can never fully understand or fathom the depths of knowledge and wisdom God had designed for his son, but I know that without that I would be full of sin with no chance of eternal life with Christ.

Youth: Sometimes it's hard to know what to do and where to go. Ask God to show you the way. His way is best!

Adults: By our actions and the choices we make, we either confirm God's plan for us or deny ourselves the perfect plan God has laid out for us to live.

Prayer: Father, it is our desire to live out your perfect plan for us here on earth. To this end we pray. Amen.

To Whom Do You Turn?

by Frank Shallenberger

The Lord turned to Gideon and said, "Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian's hand. Am I not sending you?" "But Lord," Gideon asked, "how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family." The Lord answered, "I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites together." - Judges 6:14-16

For seven years the Israelites had lived under the oppression of the Midianites. They had deeply offended God. This was their punishment. After crying out to him for help, God sent a prophet telling them their worship of false gods had brought all of this about. Then the Angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon addressing him as a "mighty warrior." The rest is history. With God's help, Gideon with 300 men routed the Midianites.

God calls upon each one of us many times during our lifetime to perform tasks for him for which we feel inadequate at best. Turning to God, we ask this question "How can I do what you want me to when I am the least well-equipped person in the family of God?" God's answer is the same to each one of us "I will be with you and we will accomplish this task together, you and I." Jesus assures each one of us "I am the vine; you are the branch. If you stick with me, we can get this job done; without me you will fail. Let us accomplish this task together."

Youth and Adults: To whom do you turn when the task seems more difficult than you are able to handle? Is Jesus your first or your last resort?

Prayer: Dear Lord, Paul told us "With Christ I can do anything." Help us to remember that, with you, no task is too difficult, no task is greater than we are able to accomplish. Remind us Lord, you are always to be our partner in everything we undertake. Amen.

Judges 6:1-40

SATURDAY, APRIL 26 SCRIPTURE READINGS

Luke 22:54—23:12

Psalms 95:1—96:13

Proverbs 14:5-6

Small Group Study Guide

We hope you will use this guide to get to know each other, build friendships and community with others, as well as experience encouragement and growth in your faith.

This week in worship at Northminster Presbyterian Church, the Son Life Singers (Mid High students) are presenting the musical, "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat"! This is based on the life of the biblical character, Joseph, whose story is found in Genesis, from chapter 37-50. It's a wonderful story, and we should all take some time to read the whole thing!

Gathering As God's Family

Welcome - Especially new people.

Ice-Breaker - Which memory is harder for you to shake: rejection or guilt? Which is harder for you to accept: mercy or judgment?

Growing In God's Word

The purpose of this study is to get to know each other and to bond as a group. If you are in a group larger than 6 people, we suggest breaking into groups of 3-5 people for this section of the meeting, which gives everyone a chance to reflect and share. After reading the Scripture out loud, read each question, and each person should be open to share, knowing that there are no right or wrong answers. Use these questions to broaden the discussion and share more.

Bible Study: Genesis 50:15-21

- e What do you make of the brothers' fear described here? Is it justified?
- e How does Joseph's story reveal the truth of verses 19-21?

Bible Application

- e What highlights and lowlights come to mind as you apply verses 19-21?
- e When, recently, have you been tempted to replace God in judging others or in judging yourself?

Going As Ambassadors For Christ

Missional Focus: How can you participate more fully in what God intends to accomplish in the lives of others, through you, this week?

Prayer Requests: How can we help you in prayer this week?

Close with Prayer

Playing By The Rules

by Andy Ross

The King is mighty, he loves justice ... -Psalm 99:4a

Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last. -Luke 23:46

Ever play a board game with a rule stickler? Yeah, me too. When I was little the kid up the hill, Denny, was a lot of fun, but you knew if you ever played a game with him, he would pick up the rules and find some technicality that would:

- a) Take all the joy out of the game
- b) get everybody mad at each other; and
- c) ensure that at least we were all playing fair.

God is not out to take away our fun. But God is very passionate about fairness! God's will in how we play games, and how we live our lives, is that we treat others with justice, fairness and right practices. No cheating!

Even to the point of his own Son, playing by the rules, and so courageously submitting to the punishment of sin, so that we could go free. Did you catch that?

Jesus died a horrible death to satisfy the universe's rules of justice - our selfishness and rule-breaking and all of that was paid for, by the One who didn't commit any sins - so that we could receive complete forgiveness and atonement. Jesus obeyed the rules, through his own suffering and death, so that we could be rescued.

That's what I call following the rules - in order that someone can be loved, and given another chance. That someone is YOU!

Youth: Have you ever been caught cheating? How would it feel if you were caught, but then someone else paid your punishment consequences? What does that teach you about Jesus and forgiveness?

Adults: Can you share with others how you have received, or noticed, God's grace? What that has meant to you now?

Prayer: Dear Lord, thank you for loving us so much that you died for us, to save us. Help us show justice and grace to others today. Amen.

Judges 8:18—9:21

Luke 23:44—24:12

Psalms 99:1-9

Proverbs 14:9-10

MONDAY, APRIL 28 SCRIPTURE READINGS

Shouts Of The Earth

by Jennifer Monroe

Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Psalm 100:1

Hear the shouts of the earth:

Red-gold sunsets spill across wide blue skies

Stately ponderosas shake and sway in the wind

A mountain lion stealthily creeps up on its prey

Mica-flecked sandstone dances in the sun

Summer afternoons hang heavy with the scent of desert rain

A family of quail scuttles across a dirt road

Mountains dream lazy dreams and wake in monsoon green

Saguaros stretch their spiny arms toward the sky

A river whispers and rustles over smooth stones

Lizards flick their tiny tongues into hot dry air

Skies sing to earth and mountains hail the plains

Birds call to beasts and flowers shout to trees:

“The Lord is good, and his love endures forever.

His faithfulness continues through all generations.”

Youth: Can you think of an example of the earth shouting its joy to God?

Adults: As you go through your day, keep an “ear” out for ways that the earth shouts, and then add your voice to the chorus.

Prayer: Creator God, give us eyes that we might see, ears that we might hear, and voices that we might shout your praise! Amen.

Can You Hear Me Now?

by Dick Leon

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ... For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. -John 1:1;17

One of the cell phone companies has hit the mark with the line "Can you hear me now?" Another has done well with several scenes in which people are talking on a cell phone and at a critical point in the conversation the line goes dead. We are all caught laughing at the troubles those gaps in communication create because we have often been there ourselves!

We are a people in need of good communication and when that breaks down we are in deep trouble. Husbands and wives, parents and children, bosses and employees, teachers and students, preachers and parishioners, boyfriends and girlfriends, platoon captains and troops ... the list of crucial decisions and relationships between important people goes on and on!

How about all of us and God? If we misread the God who has created the world and who rules the destiny of his creation we will be in deep trouble! If God were a lawgiver who demands certain behaviors and we did not know it, we would be goners. But if God indeed is gracious and loving and we never come to know that, we are sad losers.

Here is the truth of God's Word to you and me: God loves us with an everlasting and undeserving love. We know this because God's Word to us is clear and understandable! God's Word, God's self-expression, is none other than the person of Jesus Christ who is **self-giving-love in the flesh!**

The world's greatest tragedy is to pass through one's whole life and never know this truth! After sending Jesus to show us his love God asks us all: "Can you hear me now?"

Youth: What do you think God is all about? Is God a mean law-giver or a generous and forgiving Father? Listen to Jesus and you will know!

Adults: How often do you listen to God's Word?

Prayer: Mighty God, you have spoken to us so clearly in your Son. Help us to hear him daily through the Scriptures that tell us his story! Amen.

Judges 11:1—12:15

John 1:1-28

Psalms 101:1-8

Proverbs 14:13-14

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 30 SCRIPTURE READINGS

The next issue of the Northminster Daily Devotions will be available on April 27, 2008.



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