



DOMVS • DEI

NORTHMINSTER  
DAILY DEVOTIONS

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# ***Northminster Devotionals***

May these devotionals be a blessing to you as we are guided through the daily Scripture readings from *Daily Lectionary*.

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 at [www.godmorning.org](http://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 our Publications Editor, Jim Peck. This is a very flexible ministry and can be done from anywhere!

*The next issue of the Northminster Daily Devotions will be available on Sunday, March 1, 2009.*

Cover image: Door to church on Mallorca (Spain's largest island in the Mediterranean Sea), with inscription "The House of God" (original caption reads: "God lives here!" which would actually be "Hic Ago Deus").

***The grey boxes that appear on every page direct you to pray for a particular church, organization or group each day. These come from the Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2009 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study, which are available in the Church Office.***

## SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 1 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalm 180:1-13    Isaiah 51:9-16    Hebrews 11:8-16    John 7:14-31    Psalm 66:1-20

# ***Instruments of the Lord***

by Jennifer Hager

*Jesus answered, "My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me."  
-John 7:16*

In today's Gospel reading, we see Jesus in the temple courts teaching. Some people said, "He is a good man" (v.12). But many others said he deceived the people and that he was demon-possessed.

Others asked "How did this man get such learning without having studied?" (v.15)

It is interesting to me to hear Jesus' reply - a reply meant for both those who praised him and those who criticized him. "My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me." Jesus gives credit and glory to the Almighty Lord for his teaching. It comes from him who sent me.

Many of us are shy about sharing our faith in Jesus through ministry and evangelism. It is no wonder. How can we ever say or do those things that will lead someone to the Lord. Jesus has the answer.

The Almighty God will work through us just as he worked through Jesus. Our teaching is not our own. It is the Lord's. We can rest in the promise that God will work through us. We just have to be still and wait. The Lord will deliver his message through us.

**Youth:** Do you sometimes feel shy about sharing Jesus with others? Ask Jesus to help you say just the right thing.

**Adults:** Do you ask the Lord Jesus to speak through you in your actions?

**Prayer:** Almighty God, Heavenly Father, we know in all things - good and bad - you want to use us for your purposes. Help me this day to rest in your loving arms and let you make us your instruments. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

***Camp and Conference Ministries***

## MONDAY, FEBRUARY 2 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalm 62:1-12

Isaiah 51:17-23

Galatians 4:1-11

Mark 7:24-37

Psalm 73:1-29

# *Our Inheritance*

by Jennifer Monroe

*So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir. -Galatians 4:7*

You've scrimped and saved, stretched every penny as tightly as it will possibly go and yet you still find yourself at the end of the month with almost no money. You've eaten nothing but Ramen noodles for a week. You are down to your last few dollars and there are bills piling up faster than you can pay them. Then suddenly, and out of the blue, you get a letter in the mail: it seems that, through a fantastic series of circumstances, you have inherited a vast fortune. Not only will it be enough to pay all your bills and relieve you of all your debt, but you'll be able to live like a king for the rest of your life. The kicker? You've been the legal possessor of all that money for years; it's only now that the executors of the estate have found you to tell you the good news. You've been rich, but living like a pauper.

In his letter to the Galatian church, Paul says that those who follow Christ are "sons of God," and therefore, heirs to a rich fortune in him. The question is, are we living like it? Having a great deal of money does no good if it isn't used. Do we live as though we know we are the possessors of a grand inheritance in Christ, freely spending the wealth of God's abundance? Do we behave like the richly gifted people that we are? Or do we act like misers, hanging on tightly to the little that we have, living in fear that someday someone will take it away from us? Paul says that Jesus was sent "to redeem those under the law, that we might receive the full rights of sons" (Galatians 4:5). When we begin to grasp our identity as children of God and the rights we have as sons, we will also begin to live lives that attract other people to Christ. The really good news is that there is plenty of inheritance to go around!

**Youth:** How would you start to live your life differently if you knew you were a millionaire?

**Adults:** Do you live like someone rich in Christ, or like a pauper, barely scraping by? How might you begin to change?

**Prayer:** Thank you, Jesus, for the glorious riches of your grace. Help us to live in such a way that we spread it around to everyone we meet. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

***Presbyterian Church of Sudan***

***Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church***

## TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 3 LECTONARY READINGS

Psalm 12:1-8

Isaiah 52:1-12

Galatians 4:12-20

Mark 8:1-10

Psalm 36:1-12

# *Who's in Charge Here?*

by Dale McArthur

*During those days another large crowd gathered. Since they had nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. If I send them home hungry, they will collapse on the way, because some of them have come a long distance." -Mark 8:1-3*

Once, we were transferred to another city and state to live. This event caused us to secure a new registration and license for our car.

The fateful day arrived when we made our first attempt to fulfill our mission at the MVD and went from department to department. We departed to regroup to attack another day.

The next morning, we returned and played their game until about noon having won the battle. The obvious problem with the MVD was that no one appeared to be in charge.

Our Scripture presents a somewhat similar situation. Jesus had been teaching for three days and gathered a large crowd. It seems he was upset with his disciples as in verse two he called them together and basically asked them "Who is in charge?" with preparing and providing food, water and basic comforts. These people are hungry, weak, and thirsty and it would be a great task to provide for 4,000 people.

The disciples asked Jesus how could they do this in the middle of the desert. Jesus asked them what provisions they had. They presented a few crusts of bread and a couple of dried fish. Jesus was then in charge. He blessed the fish and bread and instructed them to put provisions in baskets and pass them around so people could take what they needed.

There was enough for all provided by Jesus' blessing and people sharing. They ate and Jesus sent them back to their homes. A good example of how things can change when someone is in charge. Lives can be disorganized and confused without someone in charge - Jesus is willing and waiting - just ask him and see the difference in your life.

**Youth:** Can you ask Christ to take charge today?

**Adults:** What would the change be if Christ was in charge of your family?

**Prayer:** Lord, help us reach out to you for leadership in our family relationships. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

***Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus***

## WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 4 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalm 96:1-13    Isaiah 52:13-53:12    Galatians 4:21-31    Mark 8:11-26    Psalm 132:1-18

# *Forgiven*

by Marie Ruiz

*But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. -Isaiah 53:5*

Whenever I read and reflect on this verse, I'm compelled to visualize our Lord on the cross and what he has done for you and me. It is not a pretty picture, and one we could hardly imagine witnessing without turning our head away. That alone should make us never want to sin again, and yet we are human and may fall into temptation. But the good news stated so well in the very last verse of this chapter says: "For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." This means that what Christ did on the cross was once and for all the atonement for all our sin, past, present and future. All we have to do is confess and be forgiven.

This is why communion is so important. We are reminded of the blood that was shed and body that was broken so that we can be saved. In partaking of the bread and the cup, we are reminded that we are to confess our sin before partaking of the Sacraments. In doing so, we come to the table without blame. We then can share with other Christians the Lord's table, recognizing that our sin has been washed away. The act of taking communion places us as close to Jesus as we can possibly be this side of Heaven. That is why for me, it is such a solemn act and one that frequently brings tears to my eyes.

As we prepare ourselves for the upcoming Lenten season, let us reflect on what our Lord accomplished on the cross and go in peace.

**Youth:** Have you ever asked one of your parents about communion and what it means?

**Adults:** Have you thought about what Christ has already done on our behalf, and rejoiced with a thankful heart?

**Prayer:** Thank you, Lord, for the suffering you endured for my sin and for the sin of many. Help me to daily remember that by your stripes we are healed. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

***Ethiopia***

## THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 5 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalm 116:1-19

Isaiah 54:1-10

Galatians 5:1-15

Mark 8:27-9:1

Psalm 26:1-12

# *How am I Using My Freedom?*

by Judy Williams

*You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."*

*-Galatians 5: 13-14*

As Americans, we all cherish our freedom. As youngsters, we learn to sing about our "sweet land of liberty." We pledge allegiance to our flag with words including "liberty and justice for all." "Let Freedom Ring" is a familiar phrase to all of us.

Yet complete freedom, when taken to an extreme, would allow a person to omit taking responsibility for his own actions.

In today's Scripture passage, Paul urges the Galatians to use their new-found freedom in the correct way. He warns against using freedom to indulge in sinful acts and instead encourages them to find ways to serve their fellow men in love. We are reminded of the law first stated in Leviticus which commands us to "Love your neighbor as yourself."

**Youth:** How can you show your friends and your family that you really care about them? When you pray, do you pray about other people as often as you pray about yourself?

**Adults:** Does the term "neighbor" bring to mind the story Jesus told about the Good Samaritan? How can you more sincerely show love in service to your neighbors?

**Prayer:** Dear Father, I pray today for my neighbor next door, my neighbor whom I have not yet met, and my neighbor in a totally different part of the world. Show me a new way today to serve my neighbors in love. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

**Kenya**

## FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 6 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalm 84:1-12

Isaiah 55:1-13

Galatians 5:16-24

Mark 9:2-13

Psalm 25:1-22

# ***Come, Listen, Live***

by Marshall Worden

*Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David. -Isaiah 55:1-3*

During this last Christmas, I had a wonderful visit with a dear friend and extraordinarily successful former student, who over breakfast suddenly said, "I have a surprise for you." And then he proceeded to tell me that he and his wife had recently joined a church, an excellent evangelical Presbyterian church at that. While we said nothing about my many years of prodding and encouragement that he get his spiritual life in order, he was clearly excited to let me know that he, his wife and two little girls were now part of Christ's church. This was a moment of incredible joy for me because I had, too softly and without sufficient urgency, witnessed to him and prayed for him for nearly twenty years.

Unfortunately, there is some pain in having to acknowledge insufficient fervor on my part in speaking to my friend, and to too many others, about Christ.

In contrast, in this Scripture passage from Isaiah, God questions us with sharpness and asks, as Eugene Peterson puts it in *The Message*, "Why do you spend your money on junk food, your hard-earned cash on cotton candy?" God speaks with persistent urgency: "Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good." Five times we are implored to "Come." We are told we can "buy without money." We are invited to come to God, to hear God, to listen to God, to eat good and rich fare, and to live. Our model as Jesus' people is to be equally direct to those in our midst, families and circle of friends who are thirsty, hungry and starving without Christ.

**Youth:** It is sometimes hard to talk to others about Jesus. One way is to simply invite a friend to come with you to church or youth group. Who is someone you can ask during this next week to come with you?

**Adults:** People who don't know God often seek him during times of disillusionment. Who do you know during these harsh economic times that desperately need Christ? How can you invite them to Jesus?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, help me to speak about you and the life that comes through you to people I know who are thirsty and hungry for you. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

***Presbyterian Church of East Africa (Kenya)***

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 7 LECTIONARY READINGS**

Psalm 63:1-11

Isaiah 56:1-8

Galatians 5:25-6:10

Mark 9:14-29

Psalm 125:1-5

# ***God's House... is a Very, Very, Very Fine House***

by Andy Ross

*For my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations. -Isaiah 56:7*

Let's try to picture, from God's Word, what God's house looks like:

- The welcome mat: "Let no foreigner say ... 'The Lord will surely exclude me from his people.'" -Isaiah 56:5.
- The address: "Maintain justice and do what is right, for my salvation is close at hand" -Isaiah 56:1.
- The front sidewalk: "I will gather still others to them besides those already gathered." -Isaiah 56:8.
- The kitchen: "My soul will be satisfied as with the richest of foods; with sipping lips my mouth will praise you." -Psalm 63:5.
- The living room: "Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. I will praise you as long as I live" -Psalm 63:3.
- The bedrooms: "On my bed I remember you; I think of you through the watches of the night." -Psalm 63:6.
- The electric power: "Jesus took him (the boy) by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up." -Mark 9:27.
- The residents: "Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion ... the Lord surrounds his people both now and forevermore." -Psalm 125:1-2.

Are you at home, in this kind of custom house?! I hope so!

**Youth:** What one "room" of living with Jesus do you like the best? What's one space of your life you could clean up to invite him in?

**Adults:** Any remodeling of your home and life that would make it more like God's home?

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, thank you, for welcoming us into your home of grace and promise! Decorate us with your Spirit today! Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

***Presbyterian Church in Congo***

## SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 8 LECTONARY READINGS

Psalm 103:1-22

Isaiah 57:1-13

Hebrews 12:1-6

John 7:37-46

Psalm 117:1-2

# ***Streams of Living Water***

by Ralph Comey

*On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in were later to receive. Up to that time the spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.*

*-John 7:37-39*

Jesus' invitation was a powerful one, but many people at the feast did not understand him. Some thought that he was the Christ, but others thought that he was an imposter. Throughout the Gospel of John, Jesus had to explain who he was many times. Following Jesus' death, the Apostle Paul, through his inspired writing and teaching, gradually deepened and broadened peoples' understanding of Jesus as the Savior and prepared the way for the development of Christianity. Down through the centuries, outstanding people have believed in Jesus, have been inspired by him, and have lived lives of love and service.

A few years ago, I attended a relatives' funeral at a stately old church located in a gritty downtown neighborhood. I was early, the church was not yet open, and I needed a small favor. Across the courtyard, the church's soup kitchen was preparing to serve a noonday meal to the area's homeless. All at once, an energetic old nun appeared. Apparently, she ran the kitchen. Immediately, she went about helping me. As we talked, I was struck by her manner. She radiated a spirit of joy and good will that was unusual. The Scripture passage above reminded me of her.

**Youth:** Do you believe in Jesus?

**Adults:** Are spiritually thirsty? Do you believe that through Jesus, streams of living water will flow from you? Do you believe that you will receive spiritual water, and you will give it back to others?

**Prayer:** Dear Jesus, may I come to you and drink? If I believe in you, will streams of living water flow from within me? Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

***University of Dubuque Theological Seminary (Iowa)***

## MONDAY, FEBRUARY 9 LECTONARY READINGS

Psalm 5:1-12

Isaiah 57:4-21

Galatians 6:11-18

Mark 9:30-41

Psalm 82:1-8

# ***Live Like a New Creation***

by Karen Foss

*Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation. -Galatians 6:15*

The book of Galatians is the map of Christian freedom. When you accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you are free of past mistakes and addictions. We receive salvation by faith and trusting in him and not in anything else. Not in our manner of dress, what we eat, any sacrifices we might make or anything else.

In the early church in Galatia, the new Christian converts were struggling because some of the leaders of the church were telling them that they still had to submit to Jewish laws and traditions, in addition to believing in Christ. In his letter to them, Paul is telling them that the only thing that matters is that they be changed from the inside out. 2 Corinthians 5:17 tells us "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come." So let's live in the light and rejoice!

**Youth:** Are you living your life fully as a Christian? Are you letting your "Christian light" shine?

**Adults:** Isn't it wonderful that, in Christ, we can let go of the past and step into the life of assured Grace?

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, you have been so good to us. Help us live the life that you had in mind when you created us. Help us be a servant to others and let them see the light within us that only you can provide. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

***Presbyterian Community of Kinshasa (Democratic Republic of Congo)***

## TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 10 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalm 42:1-11

Isaiah 58:1-12

2 Timothy 1:1-14

Mark 9:42-50

Psalm 102:1-28

# Yearnings

by Dick Leon

*As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God.*

*-Psalm 42:1*

I love the way the Bible drives us back to fundamental truths about life. In this Psalm, we are suddenly driven to ask ourselves this question: "What is the single, most essential ingredient for human beings to really be alive?"

This question is raised through the simple observation that the deer pants for streams of water in order to survive. Without water the deer cannot live. Water is an essential ingredient for life and so God created the deer with a built-in yearning for streams of water.

Similarly, God created us with a built-in yearning that drives us to find one ingredient above all others that will give us "life." Advertising agencies thrive on our inner restlessness so that we will buy their products. We are daily assaulted by promises of wealth, fame, happiness, good looks, sexual gratification, popularity, power, and a good night's sleep! All of these are good and appealing to us. But none of them relieves the one yearning that goes to the deepest core of our being so that we might indeed be fully alive: God.

Everything else is a masked substitute for a real and lasting relationship with God that will determine whether we are alive or dead! In the New Testament, there are three Greek words that are each translated "life" even though they mean something different. There is *bios* which means our physical life; there is *psyche* which means our emotional/mental life; and there is *zoe* which means our eternal life. Everyone has *bios* and *psyche*, but only those who put their trust in God by receiving Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior are given the gift we all yearn for the most: *zoe*, eternal life ... abundant life ... life that is in touch with the eternal!

Psalm 42 tells us that the deepest yearning of our soul is for God because God alone gives us the deepest and most lasting quality of being fully alive forever!

**Youth:** Have you discovered yet that your deepest yearning is for God?

**Adults:** When did you realize that just biology and psychology are not enough to satisfy your deepest yearning of soul ... but God is?

**Prayer:** Lord, you have made us for yourself and we are restless until we find our rest in you. Lead us all into that saving relationship with Jesus! Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

***Presbyterian Church in Rwanda***

***Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (Zimbabwe)***

## ***A Second Childhood is a Good Thing!***

by Judy Williams

*Jesus said to the disciples, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them. -Mark 10:14b-16*

The Scripture passage above has become so familiar to us that we might tend to skim over it in the same way other important words, after many repetitions, come to be merely rote recitations. We perhaps have mental pictures left from our early Sunday School days of Jesus surrounded by children. It is all too easy for us to acknowledge the importance of early Christian education for youngsters and think that was what this Scripture passage was all about.

However, Jesus was using this opportunity once again to illustrate to his disciples (and to us reading the story today) that his intentions were for all people of all ages to accept his message of salvation as if we ourselves were little children, hearing his message with pure, innocent, child-like acceptance.

In his Sermon on the Mount, we remember Jesus saying, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God." As children are pure in heart, we, too, must strive to live lives of simplicity and peace if we are to receive Christ's message.

**Youth:** Do you know in your heart how much Jesus loves you? And when you pray, do you tell him how happy you are to have him for your friend?

**Adults:** What is something you can do today to simplify your life and become more childlike in your faith?

**Prayer:** Dear Heavenly Father, we want to have a pure heart, open to the blessings you have for us today. Help us to live more simply; making time for what is truly important in your sight. Open our eyes to see and our ears to hear what you have for us to learn about your plan for our eternal life with you. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

***Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, Synod of Zambia***

## THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 12 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalm 97:1-12

Isaiah 60:1-22

2 Timothy 2:14-26

Mark 10:17-31

Psalm 16:1-11

# ***Does God Have It in for the Rich?***

by Jerry Smith

*Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! "The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! 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." The disciples were more amazed and said to each other, "Who then can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God." -Mark 10:23-25*

Sure sounds like an indictment of the rich to me. And if you look around at the congregation of Northminster and compare their riches to the majority of the world, Jesus is definitely including us as rich! So let's look at this. If you compare the NIV with the New King James you find verse 24 reads this way, "Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God." This puts a whole new light on it. I don't think God wants us to be poor. All he wants is for us to be ever cognizant that everything we possess came from God and that we are to **trust in him**. Not only are we to trust in him, but we are to be constantly tuned to the Holy Spirit's frequency so that he can direct us on how God wants us to use the gifts he has placed in our care. Rest assured, he will never ask you to short change those he has placed in your care, your family. But after that, if you listen, he will direct you to his priorities!

**Youth:** Do you believe that if you trust in God, he will never exclude you from gaining the things you need to prosper in life?

**Adults:** Are your ears tuned to the Holy Spirit so you can hear how you are to distribute the excess?

**Prayer:** Father, you have given us so much abundance in this life that we ask that you keep us so attuned to your Spirit that we might be stewards worthy of your trust. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

***Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, Livingstonia Synod (Malawi)***

## ***Preaching Good News***

by Jennifer Monroe

*The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners.*

*-Isaiah 61:1*

The synagogue was so quiet, you could have heard a pin drop. Every eye was fastened onto Jesus, this man we all thought we knew, and yet seeing him here, all of us began to suspect that actually we didn't know him at all. Joseph and Mary's son? The carpenter? Who did he think he was? Was it possible that the stories we had heard might be true? Here he was, reading from Isaiah in such a way that the words themselves seemed to come to life, flying off the page and then swooping down to settle right in our very hearts. And then he stopped reading, and the only sound was the rustle of the scroll being rolled up again, and we all held our breath. "Today," Jesus said, "this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21b).

It is difficult for me to completely comprehend what kind of impact this statement must have made upon its hearers. Jesus was claiming that the prophesy made by Isaiah so many years ago was being fulfilled, by him! The picture Isaiah paints in his 61st chapter is profoundly beautiful, hopeful, and exciting. He speaks of the brokenhearted being made whole, captives being released, those who mourn being comforted, ruins being rebuilt, joy replacing shame, justice replacing injustice, beauty replacing ashes. And it is in Jesus that Isaiah's picture comes perfectly into focus. His ministry on earth focused on doing exactly what Isaiah promised, and he encouraged his disciples to follow his example. This wasn't necessarily what the Israelites expected when they thought about their Messiah, but it certainly was what they needed, and we need it too. It is because of his life, death and resurrection that we can now lay claim to our place in this picture. Following Jesus isn't just about accepting his sacrifice for our sins. It is also about joining him in the awesome task of building his kingdom, here on earth. This is the really good news, the best news anyone could possibly hear, and it is ours to proclaim!

**Youth:** What is some of the best news you've heard lately? How did hearing it make you feel?

**Adults:** Does Isaiah's prophesy in chapter 61 sound like good news to you? What might building this kind of kingdom mean in your own life?

**Prayer:** Jesus, you are the Lord, the ruler of the universe. Give us the wisdom, courage and vision to make Isaiah's prophesy a reality in our lives. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

***Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, General Assembly (Malawi)***

## SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 14 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalm 104:1-35

Isaiah 61:10-62:3

2 Timothy 4:1-8

Mark 10:46-52

Psalm 138:1-8

# True Love

by Pete Seiferth

*In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage - with great patience and careful instruction. -2 Timothy 4:1-2*

Today is Valentine's Day - for some a glorious time to connect and re-connect with one who shares affection and admiration. For others, Valentine's Day becomes a reminder of loneliness, or kindles a hopeless thought about how their relationship will never be about champagne wishes, caviar dreams, a sprinkled rose petals. One particular legend has it that what the real Saint Valentine had in mind had nothing to do with candy hearts and doily cards.

*The first representation of Saint Valentine appeared in the Nuremberg Chronicle, (1493); alongside the woodcut portrait of Valentine the text states that he was a Roman priest martyred during the reign of Claudius II, known as Claudius Gothicus. He was arrested and imprisoned upon being caught marrying Christian couples and otherwise aiding Christians who were at the time being persecuted by Claudius in Rome. Helping Christians at this time was considered a crime. Claudius took a liking to this prisoner - until Valentinus tried to convert the Emperor - whereupon this priest was condemned to death. He was beaten with clubs and stoned; when that didn't finish him, he was beheaded outside the Flaminian Gate (circa 269) (from Wikipedia.org).*

It seems that legend correlates with the experiences of countless martyrs through the ages who took Paul's exhortation to "Preach the Word" to heart, and made it a part of their very being. Certainly the very core of the gospel message is about a loving God who loves his people, and commands them to love others with the same love they have received. While loving others and receiving love from others may be difficult sometimes, the point is that God desires relationships to be reconciled and restored - and sometimes that begins by passing someone a valentine.

**Youth:** Giving valentines is a fun way of telling others that God loves them, and that because of that, they are really special. While you may like some people more than others - everyone deserves a valentine, because God loves us all. Who gave you a valentine that surprised you?

**Adults:** How could you be courageous and even creative about passing along God's love to someone else today?

**Prayer:** Loving God, help us to be a people whose ultimate priority is love. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

**Presbyterian Church of Mozambique**

## SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 15 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalm 19:1-14

Isaiah 62:6-12

1 John 2:3-11

John 8:12-19

Psalm 81:1-16

# Trinity

by Anne Price

*Then they asked him, "Who is your father?" Jesus replied, "If you knew me, you would know my father also." -John 8:19*

In this verse, Jesus stresses that he and the Father are one. To know him is to know God. Later, he tells others of the Holy Spirit who is with us wherever we are. This all signifies the truth of the Trinity - our way of referring to The Godhead.

As a child, I was taught by the Sisters to do the sign of the cross while saying, "The Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost." As I entered the church, I would dip my fingers in the holy water before doing the sign of the cross. Over the years, the Trinity has become more real to me. Just this past week, I read a book that brought me to a deeper relationship to God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. The name of the book is *The Shack* by William P. Young. It was passed to me by a friend in California and it had already been read by two other women who signed it. She gave it to me with the condition that I read it and pass it on to someone I care about. Surprisingly to me, it is now #1 on the New York Times Best Seller list. It brought the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit to life in the form of a novel. I have selected a friend to sign it over to and of course I will buy a copy for my own library to keep forever.

No matter what happens to me, I never need to feel alone. I fully believe in the Trinity. God fulfills his promise to each and every one of us.

**Youth:** Do you know that God is with you every minute wherever you are?

**Adults:** When was the last time that you cried out silently to God and knew that he heard?

**Prayer:** In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, I willingly turn my life over to you. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

***Immigration***

## MONDAY, FEBRUARY 16 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalm 135:1-21    Isaiah 63:1-6    1 Timothy 1:1-17    Mark 11:1-11    Psalm 97:1-12

# *Is Praise on Your Lips?*

by Marie Ruiz

*For you, O Lord, are the Most High over all the earth, you are exalted far above all gods. Rejoice in the Lord, you who are righteous, and praise his holy name.*

*-Psalm 97:9, 12*

We have been given such a treasure in the book of Psalms. We sometimes forget that these are really songs to be sung as praises and prayers. The greater share of the Psalms have a constant theme of praise. When I read a Psalm of praise, my spirit is lifted up. It brings me to a realization that what I may see with my eyes on earth, and the troubles that abound that weigh us down, are no match for the Most High over all the earth. Psalm 97 is just one of these Psalms that I refer to.

We are at the beginning of a new presidency, a new time in the history of our country. And while we can rejoice in the new beginning that we are given, we are painfully aware of the important and sometimes dangerous responsibilities our leadership has ahead of them. This Psalm reminds us that the Lord reigns! For he guards the lives of his faithful ones and delivers them from the hand of the wicked (v10b).

If ever there is a time that we should place our country and its leaders at the top of our prayer list, it is now. We have been given the ability to remember the past and learn from it as we look to the future. We need God's light in this dark world to guide our leaders. It is only then that we can say in confidence: Rejoice and praise his holy name!

**Youth:** The children of President and Mrs. Obama are Malia and Sasha. Would you pray for these little girls as they adjust to all the changes they are experiencing? Pray that they will be able to make new friends in their new school.

**Adults:** Would you commit to praying for our new leaders as well as leaders around the world that they may be guided by truth and place their trust in God?

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, we are mindful that you are the Most High above the earth. Grant us direction as we begin this new year as we remember to give you the praise. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

***Church of Jesus Christ of Madagascar***

**TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 17 LECTIONARY READINGS**

Psalm 123:1-4    Isaiah 63:7-14    1 Timothy 1:18-2:8    Mark 11:12-26    Psalm 30:1-12

# ***Martyrdom of Four Apostles***

by John McKee

When the Lord Jesus Christ  
Called his twelve Disciples  
Their vocations were many and varied.

The tax collector Christ chose  
Raised the eyebrows of many  
For the stigma that hated job carried.

But the tax-man was faithful  
At spreading the Gospel  
Until his death from a wound by a sword.

Saint Matthew died a brave martyr  
Back-stabbed in Ethiopia  
While he was in prayer to his Lord.

Mark joined Paul and Barnabas,  
On their mission to Cyprus  
He was also Saint Peter's good friend.

Dragged in Alexandria, Egypt  
Through the streets behind horses  
Is the way Saint Mark's life was to end.

The physician, Luke, was beloved  
Among the martyred Apostles  
And accompanied Saint Paul to Rome.

Saint Luke brought many to Christ  
Through his tremendous preaching  
They hung him for that far from home.

John faced martyrdom in Rome  
When he was boiled in oil  
But Saint John was miraculously spared.

He wrote, *'the Revelation to John'*  
While confined on Patmos  
Christ showed John the vision he shared.

Let us join in prayer for:

***Lesotho Evangelical Church***

## WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalm 15:1-15    Isaiah 63:15-64:9    1 Timothy 3:1-16    Mark 11:27-12:12    Psalm 48:1-14

# ***Leadership Begins at Home***

by Judy Williams

*He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) -1 Timothy 3:4-5*

In this Scripture passage, Paul is giving instructions to Timothy regarding persons who desire to serve in leadership positions in the new church communities arising as the apostles carry Christ's message to neighboring regions (this directive was intended to apply to those who were seeking the office of church bishop).

As an application for us as church members in the 21st Century, it seems appropriate that those in church leadership be held to similar high standards with regard to family matters as they relate to overall management abilities.

Since leadership implies example-setting, every church member should regard himself or herself as a "leader," if in fact we are charged with leading others to a path of right living that leads to Christ. We ourselves must set a good example for others to follow.

I know that in some cases I may be the "only Bible" someone else has ever read, in the same sense that I may be the "only Christian" another person has befriended. What kind of example am I setting for the person I meet?

Much wise advice is to be found in the book of Proverbs regarding the conduct of exemplary lives. Striving to set Christ-like examples for my own family members as well as outside my home is a valuable goal for me as I recognize my role in Christ's church.

**Youth:** When you are with friends, do you remember to set a good example for them in how you act? Do you think about treating other people the way you want them to treat you?

**Adults:** Is the person you are in public the same person your family sees at home? Do you often think about the example you are setting for those around you?

**Prayer:** Father in Heaven, create in me a desire to set a good example in whatever situation I find myself. Give me the wisdom to speak carefully, listen attentively, make courtesy part of me, and above all, may I live a life of love for others. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

***Evangelical Presbyterian Church in South Africa  
Presbyterian Church of Africa (South Africa)***

## ***Are Good Abs Enough?***

by Dick Leon

*Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come. 1 Timothy 4:7-8*

I remember when I reached 30 ... or was it 40? ... I started to think about getting "in shape." And when this thought came to me I was suddenly surrounded by a gaggle of friends who had the same thought; they wanted to get me in shape too! And they were eager to work on me. Their main agenda was to run. It didn't take long for me to see that I hated running. Give me a sport to play that included running ... like tennis or softball or basketball ... and I would gladly run after the ball and try to compete. But just to go out and run, whew! It was not for me!

Paul evidently knew about those physical fitness buffs of his age who were working on their abs more than they were working on their godliness. Good abs are great, don't get me wrong. And running is great, for some people at least. But training in godliness is better. It, too, takes discipline and hard work. And the best trainer in godliness is the Word of the Lord in Scripture. It will correct the many myths, the old wives' tales of our day and straighten out our heads.

Paul's letter to Timothy will go on to make this clear: "All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16). So ... how is your godliness-agenda? Does it equal your body-agenda? I hope so, because it will last longer and do you far more good than just good abs!

**Youth:** What do you know about the Bible? Do you read it regularly?

**Adults:** Do you spend more time on your body or your godliness?

**Prayer:** Gracious Lord, give us as great a hunger for godliness as for being physically fit. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

***Uniting Presbyterian Church in South Africa***

***Uniting Reformed Church in South Africa***

## ***How to Be a Timothy***

by Anne Price

*Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity. -1 Timothy 5:1-2*

The Apostle Paul was urging Timothy to preserve the Christian faith and speak only the truth. He was advising Timothy on how to relate to the people in his church.

Timothy was a young leader. It would have been easy for older Christians to look down upon him because of his youth. He had to earn the respect of his elders by setting an example in his teaching and in the living of his life. Regardless of our ages, God can use us. Whether we are old or young, we need not think of our age as a handicap.

My personal faith required that I allow people in my life for both support and accountability. I need to ask God for a Timothy, someone who has integrity, who can be trusted, and who will stand by my side through anything. When we find our Timothy, we will be equipped to face the trials that life brings. We are fortunate in our church to have pastors of different ages, who do represent godly Timothy. There have been occasions where I have met with them on an individual basis, and when we parted I felt the peace of the Father's strength and love.

As the Apostle Paul writes to Timothy with instructions for church worship, it presents characteristics of church leaders and encourages Christian service by members of the Family of God, of which we are members. The challenge I have for myself and suggest to you is to be a Timothy to another, with the humility and love stated in this verse.

**Youth:** Can you be at ease with people of all ages with respect?

**Adults:** Have we learned the value of communicating with those younger and older than us, knowing that we are all children of God?

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, thank you for opening my heart to the value of fellow Christians of all ages. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

***The Synod of Alaska-Northwest***

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 21 LECTIONARY READINGS**

Psalm 56:1-13

Isaiah 66:1-6

1 Timothy 6:6-21

Mark 12:35-44

Psalm 118:1-29

## ***Who Do You Love***

by Andy Ross

*For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. –1 Timothy 6:10*

It was in the parking lot of our church. A dad, by his car, encouraged his son to run over to me as I was walking to my car one night, to give me something. The boy excitedly smiled, and came running to me, shouting “Pastor Andy!”

In his hand was a quadruple-folded well-worn envelope, which contained one quarter. The boy wanted to give it “to God.”

The father explained his son had done his first “chore” earlier that day and had received his first paycheck of fifty cents. And he was very excited to share his salary with God, and for Jesus.

Reminds me of the whopping gift this poor widow makes ... and how she brought her offering from her heart. The beaming smile of that child in the parking lot reminds me of the words of 1 Timothy in describing the “contentment” we feel when we share what God has given to us, for others, and for the work of Jesus’ church.

It was a gift of only 25 cents. But it has been a “pleasing sacrifice” of joy and love that has stuck with me for years!

**Youth:** When has a gift you’ve given made you really happy? Why was that? How can your offerings to God be like that for you?

**Adults:** Can you share a faith and money story from which you’ve learned, or have been blessed or helped?

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, thank you, for all the good gifts you give to us. Please make us even more generous, in the way we show our love and joy today. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

***The Presbytery of Alaska***

## SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 22 LECTONARY READINGS

Psalm 103:1-22 Daniel 7:9-10,13-14 2 Corinthians 3:1-9 John 12:27-36a Psalm 117:1-2

# ***Praise the Lord***

by Anne Price

*Praise the Lord, all you nations: extol him, all you peoples. For great is his love toward us, and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever. Praise the Lord.*

*-Psalm 117:1-2*

We have just read the shortest chapter in the Book of Psalms. It is a summons to the nations to accept the Lord. I even looked up the word *extol* in the dictionary to be sure that it meant to praise highly and exalt the Lord. If only I would read this chapter daily rather than watching the nightly news. Sometimes I just get an overload of depressing information that I have no control over. Since I have a choice of how I use my mind, I can flip off the TV and select readings or music that are uplifting. When I do this, I feel full of praise and the cloud of despair dissipates.

This Psalm offers praise, truth and mercy no matter what is happening in the world. God is not leaving us unprotected. As we look into the ways that we can get temporary pleasure by what we achieve or purchase, we soon want more and still may not be satisfied. The Lord gives us what could never be bought. He purchased us freedom for the sins that we could not avoid by the death on the Cross of Jesus Christ. Praise the Lord for the one gift that no one else could give.

**Youth:** How can you show happiness to others in knowing that God loves them?

**Adults:** Do we praise God in good and difficult times knowing that he is with us?

**Prayer:** Holy Father, I praise you with all of my heart for you are full of mercy as You forgive us of our sins, setting us free to know your love. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

***Transfiguration of the Lord***

## MONDAY, FEBRUARY 23 LECTONARY READINGS

Psalm 5:1-12    Deuteronomy 6:1-15    Hebrews 1:1-14    John 1:1-18    Psalm 82:1-8

# *Illuminated Construction Projects*

by Dale McArthur

*In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. -John 1:4-5*

There is a sign in my office that says - be patient - God isn't finished with me yet. This implies that God has a construction project going on in our lives. This had much meaning to a young hippie named Patrick.

Our church was fortunate in having a very active youth fellowship. They reached out into all parts of the community. One Lenten Season, they decided their project would be to present the Passion story to the congregation on Easter. They were to accomplish this by having a lock-in at the sanctuary during Holy Week, including the pastor and his wife.

The week began by gathering materials for scenery and costumes. All developed on schedule until the cast parts were to be assigned. They found they did not have anyone to play the part of Jesus. Everyone agreed on Patrick - the local high school hippie - long hair, small mustache and small physique. He could not resist the recruiting committee of girls, free food and joined the group. We found that he had no prior church experience.

The project progressed, the tomb and Calvary were constructed. It was a new church and did not have an organ. The local rock group was drafted by the girl recruiting committee. The group's light system and their organ were installed. The presentation was a huge success to a standing, weeping congregation. After the service, the construction project in Patrick's life became apparent as he said, "I have to find out more about this Jesus."

Patrick enlisted in the Navy and his ship came into port in the Middle East. He visited the Holy Land and walked in the footsteps of Jesus. He had found Jesus!

**Youth:** Does God have a construction project going on in your life?

**Adult:** Is there a construction project in your life that is causing a detour in your life?

**Prayer:** O Lord, shine your light on our lives so that we may see the plans you have for us. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

*The Presbytery of Central Washington*

## TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 24 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalm 42:1-11 Deuteronomy 6:16-25 Hebrews 2:1-10 John 1:19-28 Psalm 102:1-28

# ***Covenant of Law vs. Covenant of Grace***

by Jerry Smith

*We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away. For if the message spoken by angels was binding and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? -Hebrews 2:1-3*

This Scripture speaks of the Covenant of Law given to Moses and the Covenant of Grace purchased by Jesus Christ by his death on the cross. The first Covenant listed the laws that people were required to live by and the sacrifices they were to offer when they failed to do so. God wanted his people to keep his commandments because they loved and honored him. He didn't want sacrifices, he wanted obedience. But because he knew how weak his people were, he offered a way to save their conscience.

When Jesus died on the cross, he eliminated the need for personal sacrifices for our sins, which weren't effective anyway (Hebrews 10:11). His death paid for all of our past, present and future sins. The hard part is to grasp the concept that we can do nothing in our own power to gain salvation. "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-and this is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God-not of works so that no one can boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

I liked the way Bill Hybels described it. *Do/Done*. The old was a covenant of Do. Jesus ushered in the covenant of Done. So quit trying to DO things to get you to God and whole heartedly accept what Christ has DONE! It is the only way to God.

**Youth:** Are you trying to earn your way to Heaven?

**Adults:** Have you accepted God's gift of grace provided by his Son?

**Prayer:** How can we escape if we ignore such a great Salvation, and why on earth would we want to. Thank you, Father. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

***The Presbytery of Inland Northwest (Idaho and Washington)***

## WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 25 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalm 5:1-12

Jonah 3:1-4:11

Hebrews 12:1-14

Luke 18:9-14

Psalm 27:1-14

# ***Good ... and Humble!***

by Dick Leon

*To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable. -Luke 18:9*

What follows after this verse is the famous parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector. In the parable, the Pharisee thanks God that he is not like others while the tax collector prays for God's mercy because he knows he is a sinner! It ends with Jesus saying "all who exalt themselves will be humbled and all who humble themselves will be exalted."

Pharisees get a bad rap in the New Testament. But they were good people! They were the morally upright leaders of the community. Actually, they would make good Presbyterians!

But, Jesus isolates the deep flaw within them. They were not just good they were proud of their goodness and believed their goodness made them into very special people. Therefore others were "below them" and they did not see their own need for a savior.

Goodness has its problems. This doesn't mean we should all specialize in badness, however. I believe good lives are a great witness to the Lord. But in our goodness we are vulnerable to missing the deep need of our lives for the saving grace of Jesus Christ. We can easily slip over into thinking we have it made, that we are God's special people and we are a clear cut above the rest! We don't need to step back very far from life and history to see that some very ugly things have been done by people who were very sure of their "righteousness."

What is the main lesson for us here? Keep on striving for goodness in your life but always ... always ... always know that there is a deep human flaw in your life that needs the grace and mercy of a Savior! That will keep us humble and that will keep us from exalting ourselves. And that will keep us close to Jesus Christ!

**Youth:** When you do something nice for others is it easy to think you are really a pretty cool dude and a bit above the rest?

**Adults:** What protects you from arrogance about your goodness?

**Prayer:** Lord, keep us close to your side so we can be both good and also humble ... fully aware of our deep need for you and your mercy! Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

***Ash Wednesday***

## THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalm 27:1-14

Deuteronomy 7:6-11

Titus 1:1-16

John 1:29-34

Psalm 126:1-6

# *Spread the Word*

by Karen Foss

*I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart. I proclaim righteousness in the great assembly; I do not seal my lips, as you know, O Lord. I do not hide your righteousness in my heart; I speak of your faithfulness and salvation. I do not conceal your love and your truth from the great assembly.*

-Psalm 40:8-10

Me: Hi, sis, How's everything today? Did you hear that Kohl's is having a big sale... up to 80% off almost everything in the store?

Sis: Wow, that's good news. Let's go tomorrow and see what we find.

Me: Hi, Marge. Did you read the ad where Fry's has their leanest ground beef for 99 cents a pound?

Marge: Gosh, that's great news. I'm going by there today and pick up some.

We share a lot of things with our family and friends, but do we really share the truly important things? God has done such amazing things in my life, yet I don't often speak of them. I had a wonderful husband for almost 50 years. I have three great children, lots of grandchildren... even a very precious great grandson. And that is only part of what God has given me. I should be shouting from the rooftops with joy and praise. And yet, there is that little fear that I would be too imposing if I spoke of God's blessings to friends that I know who don't attend church. Why is that? Do I think they would think less of me? That I'm too religious for their liking? These are actually very weak excuses for not spreading the good news. David, faithful servant that he was, knew and told of it in this scripture. My *Life Application Study Bible* sums it up; "He keeps all the promises he has made to us, even when we break our promises to him."

When God has done good things in your life, how can you not speak of them to others so that they might know of his love for all of us?

**Youth:** What type of news do you spread?

**Adults:** Is it hard for you to tell of the good things God has done for you?

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, help loosen my tongue so I will be able to tell my story of your love and devotion to me. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

*The Presbytery of North Puget Sound (Washington)*

## FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 27 LECTONARY READINGS

Psalm 22:1-31

Deuteronomy 7:12-16

Titus 2:1-15

John 1:35-42

Psalm 105:1-45

# *Graceful Living*

by Jennifer Monroe

*For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. -Titus 2:11*

Pay attention, and there it is: a stranger lets you go ahead of him in line at the grocery store. A child sings at the top of his lungs. Seasons come and go. A baby smiles at you. Snow settles on the branches of a tree. A sunset paints the sky red, orange, and gold. Someone invites you over for dinner. Your heart beats, your brain processes, your muscles flex, your bones hold firm. Birds call and sing. You hear the crashing strains of Beethoven's ninth symphony. You take a bite of a ripe, juicy orange.

Grace is all around us. If we pay attention, we can see it in the faces of strangers and friends. We can hear it the familiar sounds of our children laughing and in an unfamiliar piece of beautiful music. In the midst of brokenness, warfare, struggle, and injustice, grace still sits on our doorsteps and settles right under our noses. Paul tells Titus that it has "appeared to all men" (2:11). Theologians like to call this kind of undeserved love of God "common grace." Without it, the world would dissolve into unspeakable chaos and anarchy. Everyone experiences this kind of grace, but not everyone recognizes it for what it is. Similarly, not everyone understands the other kind of grace, the "special" or "saving" grace represented by Christ's death on the cross. The right response to grace of any kind, Paul says, is not to take it for granted, but to live rightly. It is up to those of us who follow Christ to live in such a way so that "no one will malign the word of God" (Titus 2:5), "those who oppose [us] may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us" (2:8), and "in every way [we] will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive" (2:10). Indeed, it is our privilege to be ourselves messengers of the glorious grace of God.

**Youth:** When you hear the word "grace" what do you think of?

**Adults:** What is one way you have seen God's grace today?

**Prayer:** God of grace, in all its multitude of varieties and forms, grant us the grace to live lives that reflect your undeserved love to everyone we meet. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

***Olympia Presbytery (Washington)***

## SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 28 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalm 43:1-5

Deuteronomy 7:17-26

Titus 3:1-15

John 1:43-51

Psalm 31:1-24

# God's Love

by John Cheek

*Praise be to the Lord, for he showed his wonderful love to me when I was in a besieged city. -Psalm 31:21*

*But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us... -Titus 3:4-5a*

These passages contain one of my favorite words, both in Hebrew and in English. The Psalmist says, "Praise be to the Lord, for he showed his wonderful love to me..." Paul says, "But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us..."

The Hebrew word translated as "wonderful love" is the beautiful word *chesed* (the accent is on the first syllable and the "ch" sound is a very soft "k"). It refers to the love which God commits himself to as a consequence of the covenant he makes with us. God was never required to love us, but rather he committed himself to do so, despite our sinful nature.

The Greek word is *philanthropia*, with the accent on the letter "i." The word comes from two root words. The first is *phileo*, meaning love; the second is *anthropos*, meaning humanity. *Philanthropia*, then, means "love for people." It is also, by the way, the word from which we have our current word philanthropy.

The Bible has been described by some as God's love letter to us. These passages would support that description. Each ascribes the act of love, and the act of salvation or deliverance, to God. It is our obligation and our blessing to respond in love, both to God and to the humanity which God loves with a forever, sacrificial love.

**Youth:** Think about a time someone showed you that they loved you. How did you show that you loved them back?

**Adults:** What are things in your life that confirm God's love for you? How can you respond to that love, and to whom can you show it?

**Prayer:** Lord, may we every day show to others the love which you have shown us. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

**Seattle Presbytery (Washington)**



# **Northminster Presbyterian Church**

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