



# **Northminster Daily Devotions**

**Vol. 36**

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**No. 4**

# ***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.com](http://www.godmorning.com). 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 next issue of the Northminster Daily Devotions will be available on Sunday, April 26, 2009.*

*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.*

## *April Fools Day*

by Pete Seiferth

*But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? -Romans 10:14-15a*

Hey look! Your shoe is untied!

I know, you are smarter than that! You are not going to look at your shoe—because you know what day it is! Anyone who believes or trusts anyone today has to watch out—many are on the look out for a gullible fool who will fall for the trick of actually believing something that they are being told. But not you! (Have you looked at your shoe yet?)

Maybe you've seen the bumper sticker that says, "I'm a Fool for Jesus! Whose Fool are You?" It's true that in life, we all follow someone—family members, friends, peers, bosses, politicians, church leaders... and in order to truly follow someone, we need to trust them. Sometimes, people have been so badly burned in life, that they have discovered that they can't trust anyone—they have been made the fool too many time—and the only person they feel that they can trust is themselves. But people are not strong enough or wise enough to go life alone. The Bible says "God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong." (1 Cor 1:27)

The truth is that we need Jesus for our salvation, and to know how to be a part of his plan for the redemption and reconciliation of the world! Will you put your trust—and lay the weight of your life, from here to eternity—in Jesus?

No fooling! It is the church—you and me—who are given the task of earning the trust of the world around us so that we may exhibit and proclaim the goodness of God, and the joy of having a relationship with Jesus. They might look at us like we are fools, but "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

**Youth:** What's the best April Fools joke ever? Have you ever told someone about your faith, or about God, and had someone look at you like you were a fool? What was that like?

**Adults:** What does it mean to you to put your trust in God? Who was it that communicated the truth of the gospel most clearly to you? How have you demonstrated what the Kingdom of God is like in your own life?

**Prayer:** God of mystery, thank you for sending your son Jesus with the message of faith, hope, and love, and that you send others to communicate your gospel to all people. May people turn and place your trust in you, and may you use us to accomplish this task. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

***The Presbytery of Northern Waters (Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin)***

THURSDAY, APRIL 2 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalm 27:1-14

Jeremiah 26:1-24

Romans 11:1-12

John 10:19-42

Psalm 126:1-6

## ***Beam Me Up, Scottie***

by Dale McArthur

*Again the Jews picked up stones to stone him. -John 10:31*

The saying remains around our house from the Star Trek days, that when we need help getting going, we call for the engineer Scottie to “Beam Us Up.”

I wonder if Scottie could also beam us back to another time, like standing with the crowd that was threatening to stone Jesus because he wasn’t doing things the way they had always done it.

Jesus’ dialogue with the crowd surely caused them to drop their stones and maybe a few decided to recognize Jesus as the Son of God and joined him as a follower.

“Beam us up, Scottie” and help us realize what crowd we are standing with and what kind of stone is in our hand. Could it be a stone of denial that the church program is really our job or should we let someone else do it? Maybe we just don’t recognize the church as his instrument to help his people.

Is that stone getting heavy and can we drop it and come be a follower/worker in his church? If not now, when? If not today, why?

**Youth:** Have you ever felt uncomfortable as a member of your group? Is Jesus calling you from your group to join him?

**Adults:** What is the new way of doing the old program for today’s world? Is the rock you are carrying making you tired?

**Prayer:** Lord, help us be aware of the rocks that are keeping us from walking close with you. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

***The Presbytery of Prospect Hill (Iowa and Nebraska)***

## *The Other Side of Evangelism*

by Scott Coverdale

*You stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but tremble. -Romans 11:20*

In this pluralistic, complicated world it is a challenge to engage with people who come with a different world view from ourselves.

I recall one day when a Muslim friend of mine sat me down and shared his gospel with me. He earnestly explained his faith, and how important it was that I recognize the truth of it so that I could be reconciled with God, and spend eternity in Heaven instead of Hell. He explained the beauty of his scripture, the greatness of God, the importance of submission. When I resisted conversion, tears welled up in his eyes, revealing his dismay that I was rejecting the truth and salvation. This friend was a good man, honest and caring, and I was truly moved by his concern for me. He recognized something godly in me as well, and he grieved that, in his words, a good man like myself was doomed to eternal punishment for my naive rejection of the true way.

I didn't become a Muslim that day, and have not reconsidered it since then. I did learn something important though that I have taken to heart. I know what it feels like to be on the "other side" of evangelism. Now I realize that when I share my own faith with someone else, how essential it is to be respectful and loving of the person, and to not be arrogant or judgmental. We Christians believe that we are saved by the grace of God, not of our own merit, not by our religious accomplishment. There is no cause for arrogance, but only humility and gratitude. Share your faith, for sure, but do so because you love your neighbor, not because you are in sole possession of the truth and have achieved a higher status than they have.

**Youth:** Have you ever had someone try to convince you of something that you didn't believe? How did they do it, and how did you feel about that?

**Adults:** What voice and language and means can you use to share God's love with another person who doesn't believe? Do you find it difficult or easy to share your faith? Why?

**Prayer:** Lord God, please accept our gratitude for your grace. Help us, please, to faithfully represent your love to our neighbors in this large and complex world. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

*The Presbytery of South Dakota*

## SATURDAY, APRIL 4 LECTONARY READINGS

Psalm 43:1-5

Jeremiah 31:27-34

Romans 11:25-36

John 11:28-44

Psalm 31:1-24

# ***Believing Helps You See***

by Marie Ruiz

*Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" -John 11:40*

What an incredible miracle in this scripture passage. Every time I read about Lazarus' resurrection, I get goose bumps as I envision people standing around looking toward the tomb and Jesus' words "Lazarus, come out!" Instantly Lazarus appears, grave clothes still intact. But what precedes this miracle is just as important for us to consider.

Prior to Mary taking Jesus to Lazarus' tomb, Jesus has a conversation with Martha, sister to Lazarus. In their conversation Jesus tells Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" Martha replies, "Yes, Lord." Apparently within a very short time later as Mary is showing Jesus where Lazarus' body is laid, Martha pipes up and says, "But Lord, by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days." Where is the belief Martha just professed to Jesus? Oops! But let's not be too hard on Martha. We probably would have been thinking about the same concerns - even if we hadn't verbalized them.

When we tell little children something and they forget, we forgive them because we consider their age; the things we teach them need to be reinforced again and again for the learning process to be complete. But here Jesus is talking with adults. This was a continuous problem he encountered all throughout his ministry, the doubt and unbelief of Gentiles and Jews alike, educated in the Law, or not. We are a blessed people because Jesus, who has infinite mercy and grace, is willing to reinforce the teaching in our lives again and again. However, if we believe, we will be able to see the glory of God.

**Youth:** There are many things we cannot see and yet we believe they exist, like the air we breathe. Even though we can't see God we can believe in him. Do you believe?

**Adults:** As adults we are sometimes shortsighted in recognizing God's provision in our life. Can you make a conscious effort to act on the belief you have in all areas of your life?

**Prayer:** Thank you Lord for your mercy and your grace in every situation in life. Help us not only to say "I believe" but to live out that belief. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

***The Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area (Minnesota and Wisconsin)***

## SUNDAY, APRIL 5 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalm 84:1-12    Zechariah 9:9-12    1 Timothy 6:12-16    Matthew 21:12-17    Psalm 42:1-11

# ***Have You Been Through Baca?!***

by Andy Ross

*As they pass through the Valley of Baca, they make it a place of springs; the autumn rains also cover it with pools. -Psalm 84:6*

Have you ever been to Last Chance, Colorado? How about Enigma, Georgia? Ever visited Solitude, Indiana? Quicksand, Kentucky? Ever vacationed in Cutoff, Louisiana; or stayed in Boring, Maryland? Ever spent time in Hell, Michigan? Ever asked a question, in Why, Arizona?

Or have you been through a place called “Baca”? A name that means “weeping” and was referred to as a stretch on a spiritual pilgrimage, where it was very arid. Get it? When you are lacking water you thirst ... you might even start weeping.

This beautiful song is a picture of how when your heart is set on home, a home in which God dwells with you, even places like Baca can become “a place of springs.”

On this Palm Sunday, reflect on Jesus’ pilgrimage. How he chose to ride into a place where he would be questioned, challenged, arrested, executed. A place of weeping.

Jesus rode into that place so our lives now can discover the springs of his eternal love.

**Youth:** Ever been on a trip that made you want to weep, or just go crazy? How can your life with Jesus be a “home” for you wherever you are?

**Adults:** What are the ways you find strength in our Savior, when you’re passing through Death Valleys?

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, thank you, for the ways you refresh us with your suffering, faithfulness and eternal love. Thank you for riding into the city, for dying for our sins, so that we can be made new, with springs of hope and new life, in you! Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

***Palm Sunday***

## MONDAY, APRIL 6 LECTONARY READINGS

Psalm 119:73-80 Jeremiah 11:11-20,12:1-16 Philippians 3:1-14 John 12:9-19 Psalm 121:1-8

# ***Meditating On A Hill***

by Anne Price

*I lift up my eyes to the hills-where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. -Psalm 121:1-2*

For those of us who use meditation as a way to feel God's presence, picturing a peaceful place brings us into the moment. When I read this passage, the thought that came to me immediately was me sitting on the grass of a high hill in Averill Park that I used to climb as a child in San Pedro, California. It was taught to me in Church that God was everywhere. So feeling the warm grass under me while seeing the sun shining from the clear blue sky, I was completely at peace.

Today, any time I want to slip away mentally from my earthly activities I can close my eyes, put myself in the park on the hill, and communicate with God who is with me now as he was when I was just a little child.

God watches over us, placing us under His umbrella of protection. He guards us against the dangers that threaten to destroy our life. God exercises great care over us day and night whether we are on a mountain or in a deep valley. As I now live in the beautiful Tucson Mountains I see these mountains as a symbol of God's love, power and care.

**Youth:** Have you picked a place that is so beautiful that you feel God's presence even when you go there in your mind?

**Adults:** Can you close your eyes and know that God is whispering to you wherever you are?

**Prayer:** Thank you Father for letting me go to you as I meditate with picture memories as well as words. I still know that your love surrounds me. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

***The Presbytery of Winnebago (Wisconsin)***

## God's Foolishness

by Dick Leon

*For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. –1 Corinthians 1:18*

The “cross” is a loaded symbol. In the days of the New Testament period it was the dreaded form of an agonizing death reserved for criminals. In our day, I suppose a comparable symbol would be a gallows with a noose, even though such a form of death would be far less painful and much quicker than dying on a cross.

The “message of the cross” is that one man’s death on this cruel instrument has become the grounds for salvation to the entire world! This sounds like utter foolishness to the world Paul is writing to and to our world as well! Such a claim confounds all logic to the human mind.

So, what makes this message so believable to us? I think it is just because it is so foolish to our way of thinking! Only a God of incredible compassion for the world could imagine dying in this way for us. Only a God of immeasurable love could go to this extreme length to get our attention and to validate his claim of love for us. Anything less could be passed off as cheap or cavalier or inconsequential.

Clearly this message is not of human origin or human invention ... it is too “foolish” for us to imagine! The power of the “message of the cross” is that it reaches our hearts, not just our heads!

God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom! (1:25) This truth is what lies behind Pascal’s most famous line: “The heart has its reasons that reason does not know!”

**Youth:** Does the message of the cross make sense to you?

**Adults:** What is the place of human logic in your belief in the cross of Christ? What is the place of your heart in your belief in the cross of Christ?

**Prayer:** Mighty God, we are stunned by the manner with which you have substantiated your saving love for us by your Son’s death on a cruel cross. We love you and we thank you that in this cross we have found your redeeming power! In this Holy Week empower us to embrace your cross-message afresh! Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

**National Council of Churches in Korea (South Korea)**

## WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalm 5:1-12    Jeremiah 17:5-10,14-18    Philippians 4:1-13    John 12:27-36    Psalm 27:1-14

# *Identify Your Witnesses*

by Karen Foss

*Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. -Hebrews 12:1-3*

The witnesses they were talking about here are Gideon, Samson, David, Samuel and the prophets, among others. With this being holy week, we should identify our “cloud of witnesses” here at NPC and let them be our encouragement. We all get tired of the struggles that we sometimes go through in this life. But none of us struggle alone. All you have to do is look around and realize that others have faced big challenges, some far bigger than ours, and have triumphed through hard work and maintaining their relationship with God. We can learn a lot from these “witnesses.” We must keep our eyes on Jesus and rely on the power of the Holy Spirit to help us with our struggles.

Tomorrow evening we have the opportunity to participate in one of the most moving services here at Northminster. Maundy Thursday services will help us focus on Jesus at the last supper and his crucifixion. Then on Sunday, we can all rejoice in the resurrection of Jesus. He triumphed and so can we!

**Youth:** Who do you rely on when you are struggling with something? Do you know someone that may have gone through the same thing?

**Adults:** Who would you identify as some of your “witnesses?” Do you go to them when the going gets tough? How have they helped you?

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, we face so many hardships here on earth. Thank you for surrounding us with people that have faced some of the problems we have and, with the help of the Holy Spirit and their faith, have overcome those hardships. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

***Christian Literature Society (South Korea)***

## THURSDAY, APRIL 9 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalm 27:1-14 Jeremiah 20:7-18 1 Corinthians 10:14-17;11:27-32 John 17:1-26 Psalm 126:1-6

# ***Eucharist\****

by Jennifer Monroe

*For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. -1 Corinthians 11:26*

This is my body:

Golden-grown grain gathered and crested  
To wind-rippled waves, winnowed and threshed  
And stone-ground into silt-fine flour  
Finger-kneaded, folded and blended  
With olive oil, (virgin scent of sharp shadows)  
Salt, and water into dusty-dry dough  
Fire-formed to loaves of honey-brown light  
Split, spread with butter, softly sweet  
Life, the miracle, bit, chewed, and swallowed  
Broken for you

This is my blood:

Glass globes of grapes like scarlet marbles  
Hid in heavy-hanging clusters  
Away under wide emerald leaves,  
Plucked and crushed, they shed their shabby skins  
And spilled in streams of thick spicy sweet,  
Oaken-aged, waiting for rightness  
Life, spread past the tips of your tongues,  
Over your teeth and down your throats  
Poured out for you.

Eat hearty  
Drink deep  
For your Messiah is come

On this Maundy Thursday, may you taste and smell and see and hear and feel the Lord's goodness through the breaking of the bread and the celebration of the cup, proclaiming his death and resurrection, and expectantly waiting for his coming again.

**Youth:** What do you think it was like to be one of the disciples with Jesus during that Passover night, right before he was arrested?

**Adults:** Is the celebration of the Lord's Supper something you relish? Why or why not?

**Prayer:** Thank you, Jesus, for the grace of communion, the Lord's Supper, Eucharist. We celebrate your first coming and eagerly await your second. Amen.

*\* Eucharist is a Greek word for the Lord's Supper, which means "to thank."*

Let us join in prayer for:

***Presbyterian College and Theological Seminary (South Korea)***

## FRIDAY, APRIL 10 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalm 22:1-31 Wisdom of Solomon 1:16-2:1,12-22 1 Peter 1:10-20 John 13:36-38 Psalm 105:1-45

# ***Why Is Today Called “Good”?***

by Judy Williams

*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning? All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted away within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death. -Psalm 22:1,7,14,15*

These words spoken from David's heart long before Jesus' crucifixion are perfectly fitting in their prophetic description of the torment experienced by our savior.

In my youthful years, I could understand the agony that death on a cross would mean for Jesus; therefore, to call the remembrance of the Friday on which he died “good” did not make any sense to me! It should be called “Bad Friday,” I thought!

Only in later years did I fully appreciate why Jesus' death was an important part of God's plan. Then I came to realize how truly good his sacrifice was. This dark day of remembrance will become illuminated in the glorious light of the Resurrection on Easter morning! Praise God for his GOOD plan for our salvation!

David went on to say, “a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet... They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing,” further foretelling what would happen the day Jesus died.

The suffering Jesus endured was the ultimate sacrifice. Because he died for us, we are forgiven. How GOOD it is to trust in him! We look forward to Sunday because we know he LIVES!

**Youth:** Do you understand why we call the day on which Jesus died “Good Friday?”

**Adults:** Will you take time today to thank God for his perfect plan of redemption? Will you share what this means to you with others today?

**Prayer:** Father, your only son came to show us the way to eternal life with you. Through his sacrifice we know we are forgiven. Thank you for your loving kindness. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

***Honam Theological Seminary (South Korea)***

**SATURDAY, APRIL 11 LECTIONARY READINGS**

Psalm 43:1-5

Job 19:21-27a

Hebrews 4:1-16

Romans 8:1-11

Psalm 31:1-24

## ***In Plain Sight***

by Jennifer Hager

*For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirits, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. -Hebrews 4:12-13a*

I started studying the Bible about six years ago with a small group of women from Northminster. We are self-directed with each person reading before we meet to bring together our ideas. It is a wonderful testimony to God's love when we consider how much we have learned and how God speaks to us. Before I joined this small group, I read God's word on my own, but somehow, I didn't "get it".

The author of Hebrews writes about the power of the Holy Scripture. God's Word penetrates our hearts and minds and convicts us of his majesty, grace and love. The Bible gives us direction and purpose as God intends.

Even when our small group struggles for meaning from the passage we are studying, God looks into the heart of each of us. He reveals to us what we should know of him for that day and always.

**Youth:** Where do you go when you need direction? The Bible will help you. Try it!

**Adults:** Have you committed to growing in your relationship with the Lord? Join a Bible study and He will draw you close.

**Prayer:** Almighty God, thank you for your Holy Word. Know my heart and lead me to you daily. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

***Hanil Theological Seminary (South Korea)***

# ***The “Seas” Have Lifted Up Their Voice***

by John Cheek

*The Lord reigns, he is robed in majesty; the Lord is robed in majesty and is armed with strength. The world is firmly established; it cannot be moved. Your throne was established long ago; you are from all eternity. The seas have lifted up, O Lord, the seas have lifted up their voice; the seas have lifted up their pounding waves. Mightier than the thunder of the great waters, mightier than the breakers of the sea - the Lord on high is mighty. Your statutes stand firm; holiness adorns your house for endless days, O Lord. -Psalm 93:1-5*

I've lived in the Sonoran Desert all my life and I hope to always live here. It may or may not be surprising, then, that one of my favorite places to spend time is on the cliffs at Cambria, California, watching the surf pound into the rocks along the shore. I feel myself deeply moved by this experience. I love the sound of the ocean, I love the feel of the spray, and I love the explosion of the waves into a million droplets of water, each reflecting in its own way.

God's power and the beauty of his creation are on display at the ocean, in the forest, in the mountains, and in my beloved desert. The Psalmist would no doubt agree. But there are other places and circumstances in which we see God's creative power. In a sunrise, in the comfort of a friend, in the birth of a child, in walking hand-in-hand, this mysterious power and glory of God is there.

May we each be mindful of where we are and what surrounds us, and may we truly seek to see God in all of it.

**Youth:** What makes you think of God? Think about how God is in some of the places we don't expect.

**Adults:** Celtic Christianity described what it called "thin places." These were locations where it was felt that the distance between God and humanity was almost paper-thin. What are the circumstances that are "thin places" in your life?

**Prayer:** Lord, teach us to know, more and more every day, how close you are to us. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

***One Great Hour of Sharing***

## MONDAY, APRIL 13 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalm 97:1-12

Jonah 2:1-10

Acts 2:14,22-32

John 14:1-14

Psalm 124:1-8

# ***Who is On Your Side?***

by Marie Ruiz

*If the Lord had not been on our side when men attacked us, when their anger flared against us, they would have swallowed us alive; our help is in the name of the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. -Psalm 124: 2,8*

In this passage, the Psalmist is telling the people of Israel the number of times the Lord God has saved their necks! And the nation is rejoicing in the fact that they also understand that their help is in the name of the Lord, the mighty one, the maker of heaven and earth.

If we think about it, we can say the same! Where would we be without our Lord's continuous provision for our health and safety? Those who choose to put their trust in God are granted his way of escape in all difficulties and in all trials. It doesn't mean that we won't have hardships or even persecution this side of heaven, but God's grace and protection is all-sufficient.

Our God, Maker of Heaven and Earth, knows all and is all in all. He has covered our sin on the cross, he knows our shortcomings and he knows our frame. He is forever on our side, making intercession for us. With this knowledge, we can say, as Israel does, "We have escaped like a bird out of the fowler's snare. Praise be to the Lord!"

**Youth:** Did you know that the God of this universe is concerned for you more than anything in this world. He knows you by name. How can you be certain of his protection?

**Adults:** The assurance that we have from our Lord is a priceless commodity in our day. We have nothing to fear, if we have put our trust in the Lord. Can you recall a recent event that made you aware of God's hand of protection on your life?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, no amount of thanks can equal your gifts to us on a daily basis, but it is important for us to thank you and make your deeds known to others who haven't placed their trust in you. May we never forget to say thanks! Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

***Presbyterian Church of Pakistan***

## ***How to Make Friends***

by Jerry Smith

*Because I live, you will also live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him. John 14:19b-21*

I have just had a wonderful experience, that through all of my wonderful brothers' and sisters' prayers, was as great as human beings and God could make it. That experience was having my right knee surgically replaced.

From the first nurse I met at 5:30am on Wednesday, who shaved my knee, through pre-op, the operation, although thankfully I can't say I remember that, until the two ward nurses walked me to my car at 12:00pm on Friday when I was discharged, my care was performed by the most competent, compassionate loving friends I've ever met.

On my last trip to the "Torture Chamber" (where they demonstrate, in no uncertain actions, that your newly reconstructed knee will bend much further in all directions than you are absolutely certain is possible). While sitting waiting for the torture to begin, I called over a brother who I thought I might have humiliated. As I put my arm around him, apologized and assured him of my intent, we got to talking about how wonderful I considered the care I received from everyone at the Tucson Medical Center. His response to my evaluation of the care surprised me, He said, "Your care was directly proportional to what you expected to find when you arrived."

Can it really be that simple? No, it's not quite that simple. But there is a shred of truth that I will expand upon in my April 24 devotion.

**Youth:** Do you believe you can draw more bees with honey than vinegar?

**Adults:** When you go to your favorite restaurant is the wait staff drawing straws to wait on you?

**Prayer:** Father God you have been so graciously generous in sharing your love to us please help us to share it with others. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

***Gujranwala Theological Seminary (Pakistan)***

## ***Remember to Give Praise***

by Karen Foss

*Now a man crippled from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts. When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, "Look at us!" So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them. Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God. -Acts 3:2-8*

Two things stand out to me in this passage. The crippled man asked for money but got something so much better. It reminds me that I may ask God for one thing and, because he is God and knows what I need, he will give me something that he knows is better for me. It might not be what I wanted but it will probably make me stronger. I bet this has happened in your life too!

The next thing that stands out to me is that the crippled man didn't just get up, thank them and walk away. No, he jumped up and began walking and jumping and praising God. This is the way we should express our joy for the everyday gifts God gives us. When we receive a present from a friend, we praise their thoughtfulness... does God deserve less? One of the best things you can do is to start a joy list. Each day think of something new to thank God for and remember it in your prayers that night. You will be surprised how long that list will grow!

**Youth:** How do you thank God for the gifts he gives you?

**Adults:** Do you joyfully praise the Lord every day for the good things in your life? Do you also praise Him for the things that have made you stronger?

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, thank you for knowing what I need every day and providing for me. It is in the name of Jesus that we pray. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

***Presbyterian Church of India***

## *Personal Testimony*

by Jennifer Hager

*When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me. And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning. -John 15:26-27*

In my NIV Life Application Study Bible, sections of Scripture are outlined with subtitles. In John 14, at verse 15, the heading is "Jesus Promises the Holy Spirit." In today's Scripture, comes the promise.

Please notice that Jesus refers to the "Spirit of truth WHO goes out from the Father" (emphasis mine). Jesus refers to the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, as a WHO. This is a pronoun that refers to a person. Jesus reveals his disciples and to us that the Holy Spirit is personal. What a powerful statement of the nature of the Counselor. He goes out from the Father to teach us and remind us of his love and his grace.

In verse 27, Jesus commands the disciples to testify. This is our command as well. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and with the strength of Christ in us, we are to testify.

**Youth:** Do you share with your friends the experience you have at worship, at Sunday school and in your youth group?

**Adults:** Do we rely daily on the promise of Christ in the Holy Spirit to tell others of our relationship with God?

**Prayer:** Almighty God, Heavenly Father, fill me with Your spirit so that I may be a living testimony to your grace. Let me speak with words that the Spirit gives me to those You have placed in my life. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

*Mizoram Synod of the Presbyterian Church of India*

## ***The Shy One***

by Dick Leon

*But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. John 16.13-14*

*A very good friend of mine, Dr. Dale Bruner, has written extensively on the person and the work of the Holy Spirit. I love his simple description that the "Holy Spirit is the **shy member** of the Trinity."*

When Jesus tells us that the Spirit of truth will come (a wonderful name for the Holy Spirit, by the way!), he is telling us that the work of the Spirit is to point back to the person and work of Jesus. The Spirit is supposed to bring glory to Jesus not to bring glory to himself! There are Christian traditions that focus so much on the gift of the Spirit that they contradict this principle and miss the balance that Jesus wants to teach in this text.

On the other hand, traditions like our own have often made the opposite mistake of neglecting to focus on the work of the Spirit because he seems so mystical or elusive. It is true, the Spirit is elusive ... hard to pin down; and the Spirit is mystical ... an inner experience that cannot be easily described. But those two qualities are exactly what make the Holy Spirit so essential to our fullness of faith in Jesus Christ. The Spirit, like the wind, blows where he wills and remains always out of our control so that we may be under his control.

The main work of the Holy Spirit is to conceive in us the life of Jesus Christ and to glorify the Son. When the Holy Spirit brings us to faith ... it is not faith in the Spirit, but faith in Jesus Christ! That job assignment makes the Spirit the "Shy One!"

**Youth:** What comes to your mind when you think about the Holy Spirit?

**Adults:** Do you realize that everything you know about Jesus has come to you through the Holy Spirit?

**Prayer:** Holy and heavenly Father, thank you for making yourself known to us by your Son and by giving us your Spirit to dwell within us and to draw us to Jesus. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

***Church of Bangladesh***

## ***The Shepherd with Me***

by Anne Price

*Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me: Your rod and your staff they comfort me. -Psalm 23:4*

Where would I go to experience a reminder of the shadow of death while feeling the protection of my loving God? Off to our local cemetery for a little field trip. I got out of the car and walked among the many burial sites looking at the variety of headstones. The space marked between the birth and the death dates was a mere dash while it represented a complete life here on earth. As I read the headstones I noticed most of them had a cross inlaid in the middle of the stone representing the love of Jesus Christ who took on our sins so that we could have life eternally. Then across the lawn I saw a bench with the inscription "The Lord is my shepherd." I knew that a loving family felt at peace when they placed their loving parents into their final resting place.

As I felt the beauty of being alive on this day, fully feeling God's presence, I knew that the cemetery is not one's end of life, just the completeness of the earthly experience. I would then joyfully go to the Senior Luncheon at our church to be with others, just glad to be alive. We would eat together as a covenant of peace, security and forgiveness of our own sins and those of others.

I see God at work in the ordinary activities of daily life. This psalm of praise can be ours as we realize God's gift of protection. I need the Good Shepherd to care for me and to guide me, One who knows my name, don't you?

**Youth:** Do you feel the protection of Jesus Christ as your own personal shepherd wherever you go?

**Adults:** When was the last time that you felt fleeting fear and then heard a whisper in your head that said "I am with you?"

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, thank you for leading me through dark places, while I feel your light shining the way. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

***United Mission to Nepal***

***National Churches Fellowship of Nepal***

## SUNDAY, APRIL 19 LECTONARY READINGS

Psalm 93:1-5

Isaiah 43:8-13

1 Peter 2:2-10

John 14:1-7

Psalm 136:1-26

# ***Your Name in the Stucco!***

by Andy Ross

*You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood. -1 Peter 2:5*

I'm getting ready, as I write this, to head down to Mexico and work with our Northminster mission team in building homes for some families there. Having done this before, I know of the sweat equity involved in putting these homes together: wheelbarrows of heavy cement, nailing the frame together, sealing the roof, stretching the tar paper, and then, lastly, slinging the "mud" — putting on the coats of stucco.

It's a labor of love and great joy. Usually when the home is nearing completion we pour a small corner slab with a blessing from us, in Jesus' name, to them; a statement of blessing, in which we put our name in the cement, and remember the Cornerstone of us all — Jesus Christ.

It's so meaningful to see our church name in a permanent marker, connected to a home we built with our hands, to bless and help a real family. It's so meaningful to go back in later years and see the homes we've constructed.

It's so meaningful that this is what being a Christian is all about — becoming a part of the house of love Jesus wants built in this world in so many ways, shapes and sizes. And we get to be a part of it! We get to live in it! We get to share it with others.

**Youth:** What have you made with your own hands, that you've been excited about or proud of? What are some ways you can do something to build hope in somebody's life, with Jesus' help?

**Adults:** What does being a part of Jesus' "holy priesthood" mean to you? How would you describe your priestly ministry these days?

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, thank you, for inviting and allowing us to build on your foundation. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

***Church of Christ in Thailand***

MONDAY, APRIL 20 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalm 97:1-12

Daniel 1:1-21

1 John 1:1-10

John 17:1-11

Psalm 124:1-8

## ***God Lights the Way For Us***

by Judy Williams

*This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. -John 5:7*

In today's passage, John explains that God shows us the way through His perfect love for us. Even though we remain here in a sinful world, Christ's sacrifice assures us that we are forgiven, even when we make mistakes. When we admit our failures and seek genuine forgiveness we receive it and once again walk in God's light.

To walk in the light is to live in fellowship with God, Jesus, and one another. I know that I am one of God's children and that my Father in Heaven wants me to stay in the light of his love.

Jesus said, "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." (John 9:6) Later, in Acts 26, Paul explained that Jesus commissioned him to share the news of God's light with the whole world "to open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me."

Jesus said that we believers are the light of the world. He urged us to let our light shine before men that they may see our good deeds and praise our Father in heaven. We need to accept this responsibility to reflect God's glory to others.

**Youth:** How can you "let your light shine" today by living the way God wants you to live?

**Adults:** Where there is darkness in your life today, will you confess your mistake and seek to live in fellowship with God in his light?

**Prayer:** Father, I want to have real fellowship with you. Forgive me when I stray away from your truth. Shine your light on my way today. In Jesus' name. Amen

Let us join in prayer for:

***Health Awareness***

## ***This Little Light Of Mine***

by Karen Foss

*My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is the truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified. -John 17:15-19*

In this Scripture, Jesus is praying for his disciples. When you believe in Christ, you become sanctified by believing and obeying the word of God. Reading the Bible daily renews our relationship with Christ and cleanses our hearts and minds. Jesus didn't ask that the disciples be taken out of the world but for them to be used in the world. He wants the same from us. We are all his disciples. He wants us to tell others about him and what he has done in our lives so they too can come to know him.

In Matthew 5:13 He calls us to be the salt of the earth. We are not to blend in with everyone else, but be like seasoning is to food and bring out the best in them.

Further in Matthew 5:16, he tells us to let our light shine before men. Just as a lighthouse helps guide ships at sea, your light can help guide people to Christ.

**Youth:** Do you follow the crowd or do you try to bring out the best in your friends?

**Adults:** Does your Christian life shine like a beacon?

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, I pray that others will see the light in my life and be guided to you. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

***Bangkok Institute of Theology (Thailand)***

## WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalm 99:1-9

Daniel 2:17-30

1 John 2:12-17

John 17:20-26

Psalm 9:1-20

# *I Have Made You Known to Them*

by Ralph Comey

*Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world. Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them. -John 17:20-26*

At the end of this discourse, there is little time remaining for solitude or reflection, as Jesus leads his disciples to the Mount of Olives. In this intense, mystical prayer, Jesus explains how he has received love from God and has then extended it to the world.

The Jerusalem Church, made up of Jesus' followers after his death, saw Jesus primarily as a Jewish messiah. Paul, in his imaginative writings, presented Jesus as a spiritual savior for all of mankind, the human face of God. Paul spent his life laying the basis for Christianity.

Two thousand years later, science has given us great knowledge of the universe, our world, its tiniest organisms, and of mankind. Yet God exists beyond the boundaries of knowledge in the universe and in ourselves. Jesus' words of a loving God still ring true with universal significance.

**Youth:** We all make mistakes and have trouble. When things go wrong, do you pray to Jesus? Does praying make you feel better?

**Adults:** In a time of worry, is it hard to see a loving God? Jesus can help us do so.

**Prayer:** Dear Jesus, please help me overcome discouragement and despair and find you. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

***Jakarta Theological Seminary (Indonesia)***

# *The Glory of God*

by John McKee

Man's mind cannot fathom  
The true Glory of God,  
For it is too great to comprehend.

Astronomers try to plumb  
The universe that God made  
With no beginning and never an end.

But the universe origin  
Is from the 'Big Bang'.  
They pronounce as though it were fact

Without giving God Glory  
For creating all things  
In his universe so precise and exact.

Within the scientific circle  
Most still hold the view  
That the origin of man has been solved

By the flawed Darwin theory  
God did not create man,  
But man from the ape has evolved.

The atheist, Charles Darwin,  
Never gave God the glory  
To his death, he refused to believe

That God created man  
From the dust of the earth  
From Adam's rib he then created Eve.

To contemplate God's Glory  
You need not look far,  
For everywhere his works abound

From his vast universe  
To our world he's created  
To the smallest microbe to be found.

Let us join in prayer for:  
*Earth Day*

## ***Be God's Dairyman***

by Jerry Smith

*How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! -1 John 3:1a*

So this is the rest of the story as I promised on April 14. As I began thinking on what my friend said about finding the kind of people at TMC that I expected to find, I realized it was more than that. It is not what I do, but what I allow God to do through me. As a youth between the ages of nine and sixteen, I lived on a farm and learned a lot about milking cows and the care and handling of milk. I would like to show you how milk and God's love are similar.

God lavished his love on us so that we could become children of God! Now that we are children of God he keeps lavishing that love on us. The question is what do we do with that love? I like to picture God the potter molding a pitcher within me to hold that love. When God pours a fresh batch of love in that pitcher he expects us to share it with others. In the days before homogenization, milk would last about three days before it turned sour. So let's say after a fresh batch of love you have a maximum of three days to share it with others. Can't leave any in there because fresh milk turns sour if mixed with sour milk. I believe this is what transpired between myself and everyone I met at TMC, I was just sharing the love God lavished on me with those I met there. The marvelous feature of this love is that every time God finds the pitcher empty he fills it up again. All we have to do is continuously find recipients to share what God so graciously shares with us.

**Youth:** Can you share with others what God has entrusted to your care?

**Adults:** Do you feel this love of God coursing through your body looking for a needy recipient?

**Prayer:** Father, you have bestowed so much on us that we need you to help us find new and inspired ways to share it with others. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

***Evangelical Christian Church of Irian Jaya (Timor-Leste)***

**SATURDAY, APRIL 25 LECTIONARY READINGS**

Psalm 92:1-15 Daniel 3:19-30 1 John 3:11-18 Luke 4:1-13 Psalm 23:1-6

# ***Keep Cool in the Furnace***

by Jennifer Monroe

*Then Nebuchadnezzar said, "Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. -Daniel 3:28*

My children know the story of the fiery furnace as the story of "Rack, Shack and Benny," three Veggie Tales characters who work in a chocolate factory for Mr. Nezzar, a boss who gets a little bit too big for his britches. At first they are admired for their superior characters, but after they refuse to worship a giant chocolate bunny and sing "The Bunny Song," (including lyrics, "I don't love my mom or my dad just the bunny" and "I won't go to church and I won't go to school/that stuff is for sissies but bunnies are cool!") they are thrown into a giant stove where all "the bad bunnies go." God rescues the three boys, just as he rescued Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and changes Mr. Nezzar's heart.

The point is to resist peer pressure and do the right thing, even when everyone around you is doing the wrong thing. It's an essential lesson for all of us to learn. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were three Israelites living in Babylonian exile. It would have been very easy for them to simply melt into the foreign culture and hide all of the things that marked them out as Israelites. (Once given positions of authority in Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom, added incentive to simply keep their noses out of trouble, and ignore anything which pricked uncomfortably at their consciences.) Yet, when they are commanded by the king to bow down to his gods, they simply reply, "If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up" (Daniel 3:17-18). If we, as Christians, are to keep our distinct identities, we need to be willing to run the risk of upsetting the prevailing authorities (our culture, society, or government, perhaps). Refusing to worship the false gods of power, prestige, money, or attractiveness may mean we run the risk of being "thrown into the fiery furnace." We need to have the courage to do the right thing anyway, believing that God will be glorified in the process.

**Youth:** Have your friends ever encouraged you to do something you knew was wrong? What did you do? How did that feel?

**Adults:** Do you ever feel tempted to worship a false god? What is one way you can decisively resist that temptation?

**Prayer:** Almighty God, you are strong enough to save us. Give us the courage to walk into a blazing furnace, rather than bow down to any other god. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

***Presbyterian Church of Myanmar***  
***Presbyterian Church of Malaysia***

## SUNDAY, APRIL 26 LECTONARY READINGS

Psalm 93:1-5

Daniel 4:1-18

1 Peter 4:7-11

John 21:15-25

Psalm 136:1-26

# ***You Saved My Life***

by Dale McArthur

... *Jesus said. "Feed my lambs..." -John 21:15*

Joan and I had entered a small store searching for just the right piece of carpet. While shopping, a young lady (Senior High age) approached me, gave me a big hug, and proclaimed that I had "Saved her life." We were surprised as we never met her before. She began to tell her story:

The church had employed two carpenters to install some shelves in a Sunday school classroom and I was delegated to "supervise." In listening to them talk I found out that one of them had a daughter that was ill with seizures. I was president of the local Optimist Club and their main thrust was helping the Epilepsy Foundation so we were well educated to recognize its symptoms.

I went to the phone book, wrote down the name and number where he could get help for his daughter, and gave it to him with an explanation. A simple act of kindness on which the father was grateful and followed through. This explained the girl's gratitude. She felt I saved her life.

Many people around us are hurting just like this girl struggling, about their eternal life. Just an act of feeding them some love—we may save their eternal life. If you want to help others but don't feel secure in feeding them—ask for help—you can become a good shepherd.

**Youth:** Is there someone in your group that needs your help?

**Adults:** It's a great feeling to help others find their way to Christ! Are you looking for people that need your help?

**Prayer:** Lord, help us be prepared to help others find their way home to eternal life with you. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

***Hong Kong Christian Council (Hong Kong/China)***

## MONDAY, APRIL 27 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalm 97:1-12

Daniel 4:19-27

1 John 3:19-4:6

Luke 4:14-30

Psalm 127:1-8

# God Knows All

by Anne Price

*This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. -1 John 3:19-20*

As a child I was taught that God is everywhere. He knows my every thought and action. It did not stop me from straying away from what I knew was the holy pathway. A practice that was a part of my religious life was the requirement of the confession of my sins before taking communion.

I would wonder why I would have to tell the priest my sins when God already knew them. It took years to understand the benefits of some type of confession to a trusting person. Becoming accountable to another human being with honesty and humility made me feel closer to God. As I would leave the confessional to do my penance on my knees, I felt a cleansing of my soul. Though today we do not go to confession per se, I still pray before communion for God to forgive me of my sins so that I can experience communion as it has been practiced since the Last Supper.

The end of this verse tells us that God is greater than my heart's desires. He knows all. If I look up to the sky and see clouds, I know that behind the clouds is the blue sky. Clouds are the temporary situations in our lives. The blue clear sky is the cleansing that God offers us.

**Youth:** Have you felt that God loves you even when you have to confess to someone a wrong that you have done?

**Adults:** When you have a whisper from God that you may be in the wrong, do you thank Him, knowing that He loves you?

**Prayer:** Thank you Heavenly Father for showing us the truth and not leaving us alone when we are condemned by the world. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

***Rural Life***

**TUESDAY, APRIL 28 LECTONARY READINGS**

Psalm 98:1-9

Daniel 4:28-37

1 John 4:7-21

Luke 4:31-37

Psalm 66:1-20

# ***May the Force Be with You***

by Dick Leon

*Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. 1 John 4.7-8*

Philosophers throughout the ages have tried over and over to craft a reliable definition of God. They have used all the big words they can find so as to sound appropriately impressive: transcendent, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, eternal, etc., etc., etc.

But the Scriptures do them all better with the warm, personal, simple, powerful little truth in this text: God is love! What that tells us all is that the ultimate reality that lies behind and beyond all creation is the force of Love. Everything else might be called just 'virtual reality.'

In the movie, Star Wars, Obi-Wan Kenobi says to Luke Skywalker: "May the Force be with you." We can all agree that this indeed is a grand salutation ... as long as we understand that the true essence of that universal and ubiquitous Force is the personal and powerful gift of Love!

In this first letter from the apostle John we read that the application of this truth comes out as admonition to you and me to be loving also. From the indicative (fact) that "God is Love" comes the imperative (command) that "we should love one another." If we say we know God and have not love then we are simply lying! Only when we love those around us and those beyond us - people different from us by race or creed or social standing or ethnic identity or political party - do we demonstrate that our words about knowing God are true.

The beauty of this truth is that knowing God creates the most loving and rewarding life we could ever imagine!

**Youth:** Is it easy or hard for you to love others?

**Adults:** Do you really know God? What does John's test tell you?

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, remind us over and over again that you are love and the most enduring, fundamental and ultimate Force in all creation is ultimately just your love! Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

***Presbyterian Church of Korea (South Korea)***

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 29 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalms 99:1-9

Daniel 5:1-12

1 John 5:1-12

Luke 4:38-44

Psalms 9:1-20

## ***Righteous Anger***

by John McKee

Jesus was angered  
When he entered Jerusalem  
Upon seeing what was transpiring there.

Moneychangers were active  
Animals were sold in the temple  
And the officials did not seem to care.

Jesus overturned tables  
Chasing all of them out,  
As he thrashed at them with a cord thong.

After the guilty parties and the animals  
Had fled from his wrath  
He began then to preach to the throng.

It's yet another example  
Of Christ's human emotion.  
The emotion of sheer anger and wrath.

He preached to the people  
With righteous indignation,  
As he exhorted them to take the right path.

"It is written, my house  
"Shall be called, *the House of Prayer*,  
"But ye have made it a den of thieves."

He taught with the authority  
Given to him by God,  
Yet not all there who heard him believed.

Although many Priests and Scribes  
Had been present to eye witness  
The many miraculous things Jesus did

They still schemed and they plotted  
In an effort to find  
A means by which they could be rid

Of this Jesus of Nazareth...  
This *carpenter's* son  
Who had become such a thorn in their side.

They were jealous that the people  
Flocked to hear him in droves.  
For it sorely wounded their pride.

Let us join in prayer for:

***National Organization of Korean Presbyterian Women (South Korea)***

THURSDAY, APRIL 30 LECTIONARY READINGS

Psalm 47:1-9

Daniel 5:13-30

1 John 5:13-21

Luke 5:1-11

Psalm 68:1-35

## ***Fisher***

by Scott Coverdale

*Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people." -Romans 11:20*

Lord God

please throw your net wide

the fine one, too,

that will capture every human heart

Let all who have suffered come into your graceful custody

All of us, Lord God, have suffered—

the great and small of us

the rich and poor of us

the good and wicked of us

the wise and foolish—

We have all suffered

and we have all, in turn, become perpetrators of suffering

And since you know this

and all of our stories—

our grief and our delight

our hope and our desperation—

please circle us in your wisdom

those of us who are trying to call out your name

and those of us who are trying to run away

those of us who know our need

and those who think ourselves sufficient

Please catch up tenderly

those whose lives are short and hungry

Please hold in a close embrace

the many who are lost and friendless

Draw up into your resolution

the angry and the violent

Please heal together

our wounded and those who wound them

So stack your net well, Fisherman  
Make sure it is strong and lasting  
Throw it wide and let it run down to the deepest places  
    where it will find even the hidden and the hiding  
        the unnamed and the long forgotten  
Draw us in, hand over strong hand,  
    to liberate us from our muddied pond  
and set us free to live  
    in your surprising sea  
        of living waters

**Youth:** At the end of this poem, what do you think the surprise is? What (if anything) does a fish expect when it is caught in a net?

**Adults:** Do you think that the metaphor of fishing can apply to God as well as to people, as Jesus was referring to in today's reading? What is another metaphor that conveys God's pursuit of people whom he loves?

**Prayer:** Lord God, please catch us in your nets, and set us free, too, in your sea of living water. Amen.

Let us join in prayer for:

***Ulaanbaatar University (Mongolia)***

# ***Agony in the Garden***

by John McKee

'The Mount of Olives' in Jerusalem  
Has three distinct peaks  
With a prayer Garden at its base.

The ancient olive trees there  
Are gnarled but lovely  
Gethsemane is the name of the place.

Following the Last Supper  
Jesus took his Disciples  
To the Garden of Gethsemane to pray

He knew that his time was short  
And he was to suffer  
Crucifixion upon a cross the next day.

Sweating droplets of blood,  
Jesus prayed to the Father  
In great sorrow and deep agony.

He pled in anguish to the Father,  
***"... If it be possible  
Let this cup pass from me..."***

***"Nevertheless, not as I will  
But as thy will."***  
The Savior thus ended his prayer.

He knew Pharisees were bringing  
Roman soldiers to arrest him  
And Judas was leading them there.

He roused his sleeping Disciples  
For the hour had come  
Very soon now... it would be dawn.

When Judas led the crowd to him  
Carrying clubs and torches  
Simon Peter had his sword drawn.

Knowing what would befall him  
Jesus turned to the crowd  
And asked them, ***"Whom do you seek?"***

*"Hail Master."* said Judas  
Approaching the Savior  
To betray him with a kiss on the cheek.

This was just the beginning  
Of the ordeal Jesus suffered  
On that horrific day so long ago

When he gave his life for us  
On the cross at Golgotha  
It's imperative we let the world know.



# Northminster Presbyterian Church

2450 East Fort Lowell Road  
Tucson, Arizona 85719-2417

520-327-7121

520-327-1839 fax

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