



2008 LENTEN DEVOTIONS WEEK SEVEN

Learning How to Be Human: 40 days of Intentions

MONDAY – MARCH 17th

ISAIAH 49:1-9 and JOHN 12:1-11

You don't have to be a "disciple" to be significant!

The New Testament scripture is the story of Mary washing Jesus' feet with the "expensive" perfume. The disciples seemed to not understand this spontaneous and frivolous act. When Judas objected to what he believed to be a waste of a precious resource that could have been sold to help the poor, Jesus rebuked him and said to them (for GOD only knows how many times prior to this), ". . . you will not always have me."

I really wonder, how many times had Mary cooked for and served Jesus and the disciples before that night? I don't know . . . the Bible does not tell us this. However it does convey very clearly that Martha, her sister Mary, and their brother, Lazarus were truly committed to Jesus (even before he raised Lazarus from the dead). They were His "light" in Bethany. It seems obvious in this passage that although Mary did not have the opportunity to spend as much time with Jesus and the disciples,

SHE GOT IT!

She absolutely understood and believed everything that Jesus had been telling her and the disciples (in her presence). Could she have been the only one at the table that believed that Jesus was really going to be killed? Maybe? In this one act, she gave Jesus yet another opportunity to enlighten the disciples about His future and she did so lovingly, quietly but in using the expensive (burial) perfume, she did so with SIGNIFICANCE. She did not need Jesus to call her out and designate her to be anything more than what we all are . . . a child of God. She was SIGNIFICANT!

Heavenly Father, we thank you for Mary and the significant role she played in the life of Jesus and his disciples and what she continues to teach us today. We pray Lord that we will understand that we too are significant to You and that is why you seek a relationship with us. We pray that we will commit ourselves to acting upon the Holy Spirit's calling in our own hearts and minds to see the opportunities for Your light to shine through to teach us and those around us. May we truly honor you today in all that we do. Amen

Janie Morrison

TUESDAY – MARCH 18th

JOHN 12: 20 - 36

Can you imagine how Jesus must have felt in those days leading up to His death on the cross? There He was - the Messiah, the King of the Jews, the Son of God. He had spoken before throngs of people,

performed miracles, healed the sick, fed the hungry and calmed the storms. He was just a young man. In John 12:27 He spoke to His disciples saying His heart was troubled. He longed to say, "Father, save me from this hour but no, it was for this very reason He came to this hour." In those dark days some Greeks asked Andrew and Philip if they could meet Jesus. While talking to these people, Jesus said that the time for judgment on this world was now and the Prince of this world would be driven out. He would soon be lifted from the earth and would draw all men to Him. The people were upset. They spoke up and said they had heard from God's law that the Christ would be with them forever. Then Jesus told them they were going to have the light just a little while longer. He told them to walk while they had the light, before darkness overtook them. He said, "The man who walks in the dark does not know where he is going." Therefore He told them to put their trust in the light while they had it so they would become sons of light.

How many of us as we are facing stress, worry, illness, deadlines etc. have said, "I think I can see the light at the end of the tunnel"? We need to remember that God's light is shining for us all the time. On the night of Jesus' birth a bright star appeared spreading its light throughout the dark sky. That same light has and will continue to guide us as true disciples showing us the way every day of our lives. I quote the words of the first verse of Jim Strathdee's hymn, Holy Light:

Holy light still burning bright
Presence of God that frees us
Lift the shadows from our souls
Shine through our lives, Lord Jesus.

Heavenly Father, there is only one light that never goes out. It comes from you, dear Lord, whose light is the only true light. Thank you for being our constant beacon. Amen.

Pat McNeilly

WEDNESDAY – MARCH 19th

JOHN 13:21-32

This passage reflects on Jesus and His disciples at the Last Supper. Jesus was very troubled with what was about to happen. He expresses that to His disciples, one of who will betray Him on that night.

I thought it was interesting how He informed the Disciples. Jesus said "It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish." Of course we all know it was Judas Iscariot.

As Disciples ourselves, each Sunday we are invited to the table to eat the bread and drink the wine as believers in Christ and to ask His forgiveness. So as Jesus hands this piece of bread to Judas, knowing what he is going to do when he leaves them, Jesus is not only telling His Disciples who will betray Him, but is He also forgiving Judas for what he is going to do?

As soon as Judas took the bread, it is said that Satan entered into Judas. "What you are about to do, do quickly," Jesus told him, but no one at the feast understood why Jesus said that to him.

My bible points out verses to reflect on and suggests questions: (verse27) Judas let Satan control him rather than God's love. Does a love relationship with God control all you do?

And this reflection and question for (verses 31 and 32): The Cross and Resurrection climaxed God's plan, bringing glory to Father and Son. Does the Father work in you to bring glory to the Son?

Dear Heavenly Father, help us all to work harder to let your love help us through everything we do, with your love always guiding us it will be harder for Satan to get in. Knowing you are there to help us, we can bring glory to your Son. Amen.

Gail Ritchey

THURSDAY – MARCH 20TH

I CORINTHIANS 11:23-24

So familiar are the words, that on this Maundy Thursday we may move too quickly beyond them.

"I received from the Lord what I delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus . . . took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said 'This is my body which is for you . . . in remembrance of me.' "

The Apostle Paul received the gift of bread and delivers it to us, that by receiving and ingesting bread we know the loving presence of Jesus Christ. I believe we are called to deliver this bread to a hungry world.

There is a eucharistic song entitled We Are Your Bread Now. It declares, "We are your bread now, he is our life now, we are your bread now, the bread of love are we." The metaphor has meaning for me. Sharing in the bread, we are to become the bread of love to nourish others with compassion, kindness, care and intelligent good will. We are to become sacramental persons, mediating God's loving presence in the common life.

Oh God, on this special eucharistic day, in the midst of loneliness, anxiety and cynicism, may we bring the nourishment of gentle, but firm, compassion and love. Amen

John Humbert

FRIDAY – MARCH 21ST

HEBREWS 10:16-25

In response to the question, "Why is today called Good Friday?"

On that fateful day Jesus knew the hour had come. He knew this was the day of the supreme sacrifice. The lamb was to be slain. Jesus was arrested and betrayed by Judas. Three times Peter denied knowing him. He was humiliated. He was then led to the cross.

In compliance with Jewish law sacrifices and offerings were given to take away sins. God's will was to do away with these sacrifices and offerings. God does away with all these and puts the sacrifice of Christ in their place. Because Jesus Christ did what God wanted him to do, we are all purified from sin by the offering that he made of his own body once and for all. (Hebrews 10:9-10) Good Friday is the day of supreme sacrifice.

To return to the question actually no one knows for certain why we call the day "Good Friday." In archaic times good is akin to Holy, thus Holy Friday. In archaic times "good" was synonymous with "God." Thus we have "God's Friday." Most important was that it was recognized that, despite the evils of the day, God evoked the greatest good, the salvation of mankind.

To end my thoughts I wish to share with you the prayer given in Hebrews 10:24-25.

Let us be concerned for one another, to help one another to show love and to do good. Let us not give up the habit of meeting together . . ."

Richard Huff

SATURDAY – MARCH 22ND

JOHN 19:38-42

. . . Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, . . . Asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission; so he came and removed his body. Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes . . . They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial customs . . . (portions of John 19:38-42)

It is Easter Eve, and as your pastor, I am full of anticipation for what tomorrow morning will bring. We'll see our beautiful sanctuary decked out in lilies and spring color, as we're singing, "Christ The Lord is Risen Today," and dressed in our Easter finery, as much as our stubborn Cleveland weather will permit. We will hear Mary's voice in scripture, saying, *He is not here*. Oh, the glory of the empty tomb – the Resurrection story we anticipate each year!

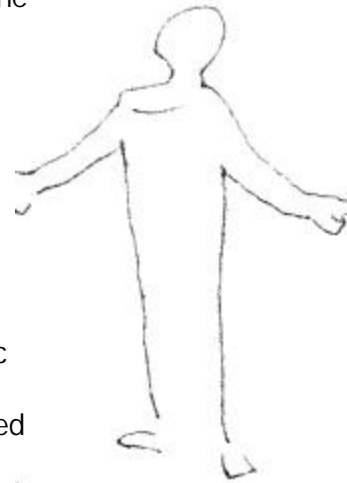
But, also on this Easter Eve, I am reflecting back over these past weeks of our church Lenten experience. Our intentions to go deeper into our faith, to reach further beyond ourselves, to learn, to grow, to pray, to study. Where did our intentions take us? How did they *change* us?

There's that difficult word – *change*. I'll agree change is rarely easy, but I believe strongly that *change* is hopeful. I need only to read these words about Nicodemus being there at his Lord's death, given the absolute privilege of anointing Jesus' body to know that *change* is about hope. Why, I remember only a few weeks ago, encountering Nicodemus, coming to Jesus a little smug and sure of himself for all his supposed wisdom. I remember Jesus started telling him of this Spirit that would enter into him and offer him new life – that his life would never be the same again. It was not. His life was better for his deepening relationship with Christ.

It's been a year of enormous change for me, in this call to be your pastor, in our new home, away from family for the first time in my life, and challenged to get to know all of you. My life is not the same. It is better. For my own faith is deeper, my experiences wider – for having read all that you've written in these devotionals, for knowing your joys and struggles, for worshipping with you, for standing alongside you as you grieve, for those special moments with your beautiful children, for getting wet with those who were baptized.

Dear God, for the changes ahead, in the opportunities to be closer to each other and the willingness to serve beyond ourselves, may hope be our watchword and the Holy Spirit our guide. Amen.

Pastor Kris



*"Father, the hour
has come."
John 17:1*